



Public Relations Statement

Why public relations is important to the NA member

The Narcotics Anonymous message is “that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live.” Our relations with the public enable us to share this message broadly so that those who might benefit from our program of recovery can find us. We perform public relations service to increase the awareness and credibility of the NA program. We share our message openly with the public at large, with prospective members, and with professionals. Maintaining an open, attractive attitude in these efforts helps us to create and improve relationships with those outside the fellowship. Establishing and maintaining a commitment to these relationships, can help us to further our primary purpose.

The spiritual principles of our steps, traditions, and concepts guide us in pursuing our public relations aims and our efforts to enhance NA’s public image and reputation. These principles apply to our community and service efforts as well as to the personal behavior and attitude of individual NA members.

Informing professionals and the public

The following statement can be used to inform the public about NA:

Narcotics Anonymous is a global, community-based organization with a multi-lingual and multicultural membership. NA was founded in 1953, and our membership growth was minimal during our initial twenty years as an organization. Since the publication of our Basic Text in 1983, the number of members and meetings has increased dramatically. Today¹, NA members hold more than 43,900 meetings weekly in 127 countries. We offer recovery from the effects of addiction through working a twelve-step program, including regular attendance at group meetings. The group atmosphere provides help from peers and offers an ongoing support network for addicts who wish to pursue and maintain a drug-free lifestyle.

Our name, Narcotics Anonymous, is not meant to imply a focus on any particular drug; NA’s approach makes no distinction between drugs including alcohol. Membership is free, and we have no affiliation with any organizations outside of NA including governments, religions, law enforcement groups, or medical and psychiatric associations. Through all of our service efforts and our cooperation with others seeking to help addicts, we strive to reach a day when every addict in the world has an opportunity to experience our message of recovery in his or her own language and culture.

¹ As of March 2007.

Public **R**elations **H**andbook

Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
Chatsworth, California, USA

Copyright © 2006, 2007 by
Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.
All rights reserved.




World Service Office
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA
T 818.773.9999
F 818.700.0700
www.na.org

World Service Office—Europe
48 rue de l'Été
B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
T +32/2/346 60 12
F +32/2/649 92 39

World Service Office—Canada
150 Britannia Road E, Unit 21
Mississauga, Ontario L4Z 2A4, Canada
T 905.507.0100
F 905.507.0101



This is NA Conference-approved literature.

Narcotics Anonymous,    and The NA Way
are registered trademarks of
Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Incorporated.

ISBN 978-1-55776-684-7

3/07

WSO Catalog Item No. 2102

contents

preface	v
---------------	---

Section 1

<i>chapter 1:</i> NA and Public Relations	1
<i>chapter 2:</i> Core Public Relations Principles	5
<i>chapter 3:</i> Effective Services	19
<i>chapter 4:</i> Preparation and Training for Interacting with the Public	29

Section 2

<i>chapter 5:</i> Media	39
<i>chapter 6:</i> Criminal Justice	49
<i>chapter 7:</i> Treatment: Inpatient, Outpatient, and Residential Settings	63
<i>chapter 8:</i> Healthcare	73
<i>chapter 9:</i> Phonelines	81
<i>chapter 10:</i> Internet Technology	91
<i>chapter 11:</i> Event Planning	97
<i>chapter 12:</i> Fellowship Development	105
<i>chapter 13:</i> Government	113
conclusion	117

preface

Welcome to the *Public Relations Handbook*!

In Narcotics Anonymous, public relations simply means taking a more conscientious approach to the relationships we create with the public. This is the subject of the *Public Relations Handbook*: NA's relationships with the public. These relationships are usually the result of members' interactions at meetings and events, members' performing specific service functions, and members representing NA (sometimes unknowingly) during the daily routine of their lives. The scope of public relations is broad. And because of that, this material is designed to help all of us in the many ways we interact with the public.

We can think about public relations as dynamic relationships. The ways we create and maintain relationships with the public will continue to change and grow over time. Because of these evolving needs, the principles and planning tools in Chapters Two and Three are the foundation of the *Public Relations Handbook*. When our relationships with the public change, the principles and planning techniques stay consistent. In addition, much of the handbook's support material will be updated regularly to meet the changing needs of our public relations service efforts.

The *Public Relations Handbook* is simply a place to begin; it is a tool members can use to become more aware and informed. You are the ones who will use this material to create a variety of inspired PR approaches in your local communities.

Public Relations Statement

Why public relations is important to the NA member

The Narcotics Anonymous message is “that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live.” Our relations with the public enable us to share this message broadly so that those who might benefit from our program of recovery can find us. We perform public relations service to increase the awareness and credibility of the NA program. We share our message openly with the public at large, with prospective members, and with professionals. Maintaining an open, attractive attitude in these efforts helps us to create and improve relationships with those outside the fellowship. Establishing and maintaining a commitment to these relationships, can help us to further our primary purpose.

The spiritual principles of our steps, traditions, and concepts guide us in pursuing our public relations aims and our efforts to enhance NA’s public image and reputation. These principles apply to our community and service efforts as well as to the personal behavior and attitude of individual NA members.

Informing professionals and the public

The following statement can be used to inform the public about NA:

Narcotics Anonymous is a global, community-based organization with a multi-lingual and multicultural membership. NA was founded in 1953, and our membership growth was minimal during our initial twenty years as an organization. Since the publication of our Basic Text in 1983, the number of members and meetings has increased dramatically. Today¹, NA members hold more than 43,900 meetings weekly in 127 countries. We offer recovery from the effects of addiction through working a twelve-step program, including regular attendance at group meetings. The group atmosphere provides help from peers and offers an ongoing support network for addicts who wish to pursue and maintain a drug-free lifestyle.

Our name, Narcotics Anonymous, is not meant to imply a focus on any particular drug; NA’s approach makes no distinction between drugs including alcohol. Membership is free, and we have no affiliation with any organizations outside of NA including governments, religions, law enforcement groups, or medical and psychiatric associations. Through all of our service efforts and our cooperation with others seeking to help addicts, we strive to reach a day when every addict in the world has an opportunity to experience our message of recovery in his or her own language and culture.

¹ As of March 2007.

NA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The principle of service, critical to the application of our Eleventh Tradition, is not a passive principle. To be of maximum service to the still-suffering addict, we must energetically seek to carry our message throughout our cities, towns, and villages. ...We must take vigorous steps to make our program widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

Tradition Eleven, It Works: How and Why

The concept of public relations is not new to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The above passage, from the essay on the Eleventh Tradition in *It Works: How and Why*, reminds us that active efforts to form strong relationships with the public are essential to NA's growth. Strong relationships with the public make it possible for more addicts to have the opportunity to experience freedom from active addiction. Our vision is for NA to thrive in every community around the world.

Why does Narcotics Anonymous need relationships with the public?

As a fellowship, we have already made remarkable advancements in our relationships with the public. Area service committees around the world bring meetings into correctional facilities, provide information to various professionals, and interact with members of the public over NA phonelines and in planning NA events. And yet, there is still room for us to grow.

We can grow by taking on a more active role in our relationships with members of the public. We can expand our ideas about which professionals might be able to help us fulfill our primary purpose. We can take even greater responsibility for the ways our personal behavior affects the public's willingness to refer addicts to Narcotics Anonymous.

Key topics

Why does NA need relationships with the public?

How can this handbook help members in their PR efforts?

What does PR mean for NA members?

Conclusion

The Public Relations Handbook has been created to help us do an even better job at carrying NA's message. It has been created to help us increase the recognition of NA and enhance the credibility of our program of recovery so that addicts seeking help don't have to continue to suffer from active addiction. Our ability to form long-lasting relationships with the public can help to ensure that NA becomes and remains a respected, credible, and accessible recovery choice for addicts.

How can this handbook help members in their PR efforts?

This handbook is written for NA members with varying service experience and clean time, as well as those who may have no prior knowledge of public relations or service in NA. Most of our public relations opportunities happen at the area level and, as a result, this handbook is geared toward those serving in area service committees. Yet, the material here can be adapted for use at any level of service and for a variety of uses.

The handbook is organized into two sections:

Section One—Chapters One through Four
Section Two—Chapters Five through Thirteen

About Section One

The first section contains conceptual information, such as a discussion of NA's principles in Chapter Two, planning techniques in Chapter Three, and PR training ideas in Chapter Four. The remaining chapters contain practical information that applies to specific areas of service.

The handbook has been organized this way because practicing NA's spiritual principles and creating a more reliable and responsive service structure is the foundation of our public relations service. Chapters Two and Three are resources for members looking to better understand NA's principles, as they relate to service, and for new ways to plan and organize services. Remember, the material here is meant to be adapted and used in ways that make the most sense in the local area.

About Section Two

Each chapter in the handbook's second section is organized into two segments: the first contains excerpts from some of the principles contained in Chapter Two that are relevant to the particular service area of that chapter. For example, the material from Chapter Two about anonymity in the press is excerpted in Chapter Five, "Media." Practical information about the specific area of service makes up the remainder of each chapter.

ICON KEY



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion

In an effort to make the material here more useful, we have provided a list of resources at the end of each chapter. For example, Chapter Four includes a sample correspondence letter, a referral letter, frequently asked questions, and a presentation format. This resource material is contained as addenda for each chapter.

Although the handbook is organized in a way that allows members to use sections as needed, we encourage you to explore all the information contained within the various chapters. The scope of public relations is broad; because of that, we have provided a range of useful information.

Find What You're Looking For

Remember that there may be useful information in a chapter that might not contain the specific service focus you are looking for—for instance, the presentation techniques in Chapter Four may be valuable when planning a presentation for healthcare professionals.

What does “public relations” mean for NA members?

For our purposes in Narcotics Anonymous, the term “public relations” refers to all of the relationships we create and maintain with the general public, professionals, potential members, and each other in our groups and service communities. We have been establishing relationships with the public all along, whether we have made a choice to be aware of and participate in those relationships or not. It is time to look more closely at how we relate to the rest of society as well as to fellow members. It is time to gather our collective experience, and improve our service efforts so NA can continue to become a more reliable and recognizable program of recovery.

“Public relations” implies an ongoing relationship. We have many opportunities to build and sustain ongoing relationships with the public. We can follow up after a presentation, ask for feedback from an institution, and check in with the facilities where our meetings are held. Our ability to respond and participate in relationships with the public can only help to strengthen the public’s trust in our ability to help addicts.

It’s easy to miss the positive influence our relationships can have on addicts finding NA. An area service committee may begin its PR effort with a presentation to nurses, doctors, and administrators at a local hospital. As a result of this initial contact, members may be asked to start meetings for clients within a unit in the hospital. And because of that, a nurse in the emergency room may think to give an NA helpline phone number to an overdose patient, and a doctor may feel confident about referring a patient seeking help to NA. The actions we take in forming relationships with the public can have a profound effect on whether or not addicts find NA.

“The actions we take in forming relationships with the public can have a profound effect on whether or not addicts can find NA.”

Many of us have experienced our most powerful PR opportunity when we least expected it. Maybe it was the time a property manager watched us thoroughly clean a facility following an NA event. In that instance, we may have left an impression that NA members are considerate and responsible. In other situations, we

may make a more negative impact. Leaving a meeting facility in a loud and disrespectful manner, or fighting at NA events, can harm NA’s reputation. We have choices about the impression we leave on those around us. Our actions tend to serve as our strongest public relations message.

We can also think about public relations in terms of how we interact with each other. Do our service committees provide training and orientation for new trusted servants? Do we thank each other for doing a good job in a service position? Do we value and use the knowledge of more experienced members? The positive relationships we build with each other can only help our interactions with the public—which helps us better fulfill our primary purpose.

Many of us may be performing public relations without having been elected to a trusted servant position, without any prior service experience or any focused public relations efforts in our local area. These “public relations” are the relationships we build with the public through the individual impressions we leave. It is easy to overlook the impact of these brief personal encounters. The information in this handbook is meant to help us see the ways in which our relationships with the public are a part of everything we do.

Public relations goals

One goal spelled out in the Narcotics Anonymous World Services' Vision Statement is to “work together in a spirit of unity and cooperation to carry our message of recovery.” Local NA communities can have a powerful impact on the larger communities around them. It is through the unity of members in their service efforts, and a cooperative attitude toward the public, that helps the NA message of recovery grow.

The following points are goals that we can strive to fulfill in making NA a visible and attractive choice for addicts:

1. **We clarify what services NA can and cannot provide to the community.**
2. **We make NA members more aware of their role in NA's public image.**
3. **We aim for the public to recognize NA as a positive and reliable organization.**
4. **We develop valuable relationships with professionals and the general public.**

The first point in the NA World Services vision statement instills us with the hope “that one day, every addict in the world will have the chance to experience our message in his or her own language and culture and find the opportunity for a new way of life.” Many of us are aware of the struggles and challenges our founding members faced as each one of them

“It is through the unity of members in their service efforts, and a cooperative attitude toward the public, that helps the NA message of recovery grow.”

sought to carry the message of recovery to suffering addicts. In the 1950s, the “worldwide fellowship” of Narcotics Anonymous was in its infancy; “the world” for those early members consisted of a few states in the United States of America. This is no longer true. Our growth exploded during the 1980s and 1990s, and we continue to grow. As a result, our public relations efforts can be more effective if we acknowledge the various geographic, social, religious, ethnic, political, and economic factors that affect an addict's ability to

find NA's message. The disease of addiction does not afflict any one particular group of people—its deadly grip knows no boundaries. And our message—the message we are all entrusted to carry—also knows no limits.

In conclusion

We know that, even with our commitment to addressing service needs in this handbook, something will be missing. Ultimately it is you, the individual member, who will breathe life into NA's public relations efforts. Your own experiences are the best examples of NA's effectiveness, making you the most valuable PR resource our fellowship has. The efforts undertaken by each member are absolutely essential to the success of our worldwide fellowship.

We can learn from those who approach challenges in unique and surprising ways. Don't be afraid to share your ideas and experiences with one another. After all, “one addict helping another” is what our recovery program is founded on—and our service efforts can use that same principle.

CORE PUBLIC RELATIONS PRINCIPLES

Many of us understand the importance of NA's principles, but how do we go about applying those principles as we carry NA's message of recovery in a public setting? This chapter highlights NA's core principles and explores how to practically apply them in our public relations efforts. By understanding these principles, we are empowered to create services that are more reliable, responsive, and communicative.

Key topics

The spiritual foundation

Anonymity

Unity: "Together we can"

Attraction ...

Self-support

Cooperation, not affiliation

**Responsibility &
accountability**

Forever nonprofessional

Communication

The principles outlined in this chapter are contained in NA's steps, traditions, and concepts. Of course, all of the steps, traditions, and concepts have some bearing on our relationships with the public. We have simply highlighted the principles that seem particularly relevant to public relations service. The foundational principle of all our service efforts is the group's primary purpose described by our Fifth Tradition. As the Fifth Tradition essay in *It Works: How and Why* states, "carrying the NA message is so important to the survival of NA that it is called our primary purpose." We work to fulfill our primary purpose within NA's principles.

The spiritual foundation

This chapter illustrates the NA principles that apply to our relationships within the fellowship and with the public. When we truly understand NA principles, we are better able to act in a mature way when we are presented with unexpected challenges.

Our service efforts often provide us with opportunities to apply principles to what might appear to be insurmountable obstacles. We can approach these challenges with an open mind in order to discover possible resolutions. For example, we may find ourselves in a situation where two different subcommittees are interacting with the same correctional facility. Each subcommittee may be in contact with different people at the facility. What is needed in a situation like this one is good communication between subcommittees. Our public relations are strengthened when we can practice principles, work together, and keep each other informed.

*Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message
to the addict who still suffers.*

Tradition Five

As members of NA, we have a primary purpose to support. While groups focus on that primary purpose, the responsibility of supporting those efforts is delegated to an area service committee. For those of us performing public relations services, this means we approach our service with an attitude of humility: We are simply recovering addicts trying to carry a message of recovery—one that someone else freely shared with us—to other suffering addicts. Our job is to let others know that Narcotics Anonymous is a simple, spiritual, twelve-step recovery program that can help any addict find freedom from drug addiction. We confidently acknowledge what services we can and cannot provide. We approach public relations with the knowledge of what NA is to the community and what NA's relationship is with that community. The principles of humility and service can help us carry NA's message in a way that acknowledges NA's role in the community.

Anonymity

When a friend tells us about the struggles another person is having with addiction, we may want to let that friend know about Narcotics Anonymous and what it has done for us. When a coworker has a drug problem, we may want to share our experience with that person. None of us will want to indiscriminately trumpet the gory details of our addiction to everyone in town, nor will we want to disclose our NA membership to everyone we meet. When we think it may be helpful, however, it may be appropriate to share a bit of our story and the recovery we've found in Narcotics Anonymous.

It Works: How and Why

We do not break our anonymity when we share with someone, directly and openly, about our personal experiences with addiction and freedom in recovery. Many members share their recovery experiences with their former treatment counselors or probation officers. This could be considered public relations, as treatment counselors and probation officers are more likely to refer new clients to NA when they see that the NA program of recovery is working in the lives of these members. This approach creates opportunities for addicts to learn about NA, and it generates an attitude of goodwill toward our program.

In NA, the principle of anonymity encourages what our literature describes as “selfless generosity.” The principle of anonymity guides us to behave in ways that put the group's welfare ahead of our own: The “we” becomes more important than the “I.” When we accept our individual strengths and weaknesses, we are practicing humility—and humility is anonymity in action. We practice humility when we understand that the group is the strongest vehicle for carrying NA's message. We are all equal when we sit together in an NA meeting; anonymity asks us to carry that equality and selflessness into our relationships with the public.

In joining anonymously in a fellowship with other recovering addicts, placing the welfare of the group ahead of our own, our own spiritual growth is enhanced beyond measure, not diminished.

It Works: How and Why

The principle of anonymity encourages equality and a focus on the greater good of NA, rather than our own personal interest. In NA, we don't care who you are; we care about the therapeutic value of one addict helping another.

Many members view anonymity simply as not stating our last names. This would only be an issue of concern in a media setting. It is each member's choice whether or not to disclose a last name or personal information.

Anonymity supports our ultimate goal of focusing on our primary purpose instead of our individual concerns. The principles contained within our traditions encourage us to humbly join together in hope of forwarding the ideals of our fellowship.

Anonymity and confidentiality

We sometimes confuse anonymity with confidentiality—but they are not the same. It's helpful to remember that when we are sharing in an NA meeting, we are sharing in a public place. There is a good chance that members will identify with what is shared. Generally, there is no reporting of what has been shared in a meeting, even when a member shares about a criminal act. There is, however, no guarantee that what is shared in an NA meeting will stay in that meeting, despite an NA group's best intent.

Another part of confidentiality has to do with sponsorship. Unlike therapists, psychologists, and counselors, sponsors generally don't keep written records of what their sponsees share with them. Usually, a sponsor keeps what is shared confidential—but this is not guaranteed. Sponsors are recovering addicts, not paid professionals. Understanding this distinction can help members be more realistic about anonymity and confidentiality in NA.

Anonymity on the Internet

The Internet can often give the illusion that it is not a public sphere. As a result, the role of personal anonymity on the World Wide Web can be a confusing one. Many members, in enthusiastic efforts to carry NA's message of recovery, have set up personal websites or weblogs. One way a personal site could respect the principle on anonymity would be to state that the site does not represent NA; it speaks only for the individual. Personal sites can also provide links to a local registered website or to NA.org. Personal websites can further protect members' anonymity by using words like "recovery" instead of specifically stating that they are members of Narcotics Anonymous. Using "recovery" instead of "Narcotics Anonymous" will help the site avoid being recognized by a search engine if someone is looking for an NA meeting or information about Narcotics Anonymous. It can also help members maintain their anonymity in this public medium.

Anonymity with nonaddicts

Tradition Eleven emphasizes that no one personality is more important than another. When our Eleventh Tradition tells us that "we need always maintain personal anonymity," it does not say that we need to do so under all circumstances. Tradition Eleven says that "we need always maintain personal anonymity *at the level of press, radio, and films.*" This public is carefully outlined within our Eleventh Tradition as the press (print and electronic media), radio, and films.

If we are asked to participate in a radio talk show about recovery in NA, for instance, we are strongly encouraged to seek support from experienced NA members in our service community; discuss, plan, and rehearse our presentation with committee members; and represent Narcotics Anonymous with another NA member.

Anonymity is not in conflict with making the NA message more available and understood in our communities. Speaking about NA to a correctional facility to provide H&I information, or presenting the program of NA to a secondary school to inform an audience about recovery, are positive efforts of our service committees—actions that demonstrate NA’s message of recovery. These examples do not involve the public media, where maintaining personal anonymity is always encouraged.

There may be times when nonaddicts can help us protect our anonymity as recovering addicts in the public media. Those outside of NA often have the ability to enter media venues in a manner that can help further our primary purpose. For example, a judge may talk about their positive experience with NA, describing how hundreds of addicts have changed their

“Anonymity is not in conflict with making the NA message more available and understood in our communities.”

lives because they started to attend NA meetings, and speaking about the effectiveness of our program of recovery. We are not asking nonaddicts to carry NA’s message, we are asking them to speak *about* our message of recovery. The role of nonmembers is to simply carry information about NA.

A nonaddict professional helps members to retain their personal anonymity with the press and protects any individual NA member from being considered a spokesperson for Narcotics Anonymous. We don’t risk our program’s credibility as much, since a nonaddict is completely separate from our membership. Members can also maintain the focus of carrying NA’s message instead of becoming overwhelmed with representing NA in the media. Nonaddict professionals, like judges, are often inclined to discuss their experiences with our program. It is our responsibility to make sure that these members of the public are well-informed and that they have had a positive experience with NA.

If an area service committee has decided to use a nonaddict in a public media event, the area needs to responsibly address any possible challenges. One important concern is that an outside nonmember could possibly become associated as “the face of NA.” One way a local service body can ensure that they have been responsible in this type of situation is to make certain that they have clearly defined the nonmember’s role in and relationship to NA. Being responsible helps these relationships to be successful.

Each public event and opportunity is unique. The local service body is usually best equipped to make informed decisions about the appropriate use of nonaddicts. Evaluating the nature of the event and the relationship with the nonaddicts involved can help an area decide if including a nonaddict is appropriate for each situation.

The traditions describe a fellowship that takes collective guidance from spiritual principles rather than individual personalities. That kind of selflessness is what the Twelfth Tradition means by the word “anonymity.”

It Works: How and Why

Anonymity and equality

Anonymity gives every addict who attends NA meetings an equal chance at finding recovery. When members live by principles, it doesn’t matter how addicts look, where addicts came from, how educated or uneducated they may be, or how much money they have or don’t have. If an attractive newcomer begins attending a meeting and the members in the group give that newcomer more attention, then the group members would be

treating this newcomer differently. Would these members have behaved the same had the newcomer not been so attractive? Is this attractive newcomer receiving a certain type of attention that might prevent them from hearing the NA message? We try to treat all members equally, so everyone has a chance at finding the freedom our program offers.

In the final analysis, our personal differences make no difference; we are all equal. It's true that we all come to Narcotics Anonymous with our own personal histories, using patterns, backgrounds, talents, and shortcomings. But for the purpose of our own recovery, our occupational identity has no bearing on our ability to care for one another in NA. A college degree, a trust fund, illiteracy, poverty—these circumstances that so powerfully affect so many other areas of our lives will neither help nor hinder our chances at recovery. Likewise, they will not aid or impede our efforts to carry the message, one addict to another.

It Works: How and Why

The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using.

Tradition Three

Narcotics Anonymous is open to anyone seeking freedom from active addiction and our public relations efforts need to support that inclusiveness. Our service efforts need to ensure that everyone is welcome in NA—from the householder to the convict. As our Basic Text says, our service efforts should strive to reach all addicts “regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion.”

Our Third Tradition also addresses the fact that no one can judge the desire of another addict. Desire is personal, eliminating the need for any standards on a member's desire to stop using.

NA Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

It Works: How and Why

Unity: “Together we can”

NA is more attractive when we are able to demonstrate our unity. Our unity shows when we use our diversity as a strength in our meetings and our services. When a group of addicts from different backgrounds and with varying beliefs serves together, they highlight our unity in a way that is extraordinarily attractive. When thinking about our unity in terms of attracting a variety of using addicts, we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- 📖 How do we demonstrate an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings?
- 📖 Are we open and welcoming to all those who attend our meetings?
- 📖 In our service committees, are we receptive to members in the fellowship and attractive to the public?


We are the ones who bring to life Narcotics Anonymous' simple message of recovery from addiction—a message that ensures freedom for any addict, from any background or age group, to experience recovery from active addiction.

In our efforts to fulfill the all-encompassing goal of remaining open to and inclusive of all addicts, members may want to take time to identify groups that reside in their local community and that are missing from NA meetings. Addiction crosses all cultural boundaries; the absence at our meetings of individuals from a certain cultural group doesn't mean that no one from that culture suffers from addiction or needs what we have to offer. Asking questions like *Who in our community is missing from our meetings?* and *Who in our community does NA need to reach?* will help to focus service efforts where they are needed the most. Having group discussions about the area's goals will help to focus PR efforts.

One approach for attracting potential members to NA is to create service projects specifically designed to reach those potential members. If members live in a community where the largest population is made up of retired citizens or those confined to convalescent homes, members of the area might consider creating a presentation that would show two important realities about NA: that there are older people clean and recovering in NA, and that those members participate in a fellowship with a diverse membership. This could be accomplished by asking some older members in the local area to participate in a presentation with a diverse group of NA members. These steps can illustrate both the diversity and the unity of our fellowship. Our public relations efforts are likely to be more valuable and effective when we take some time to plan the best ways to approach potential members.

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity.

Tradition One

 Unity is the spirit that joins thousands of members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change lives.

It Works: How and Why

Our collective service efforts help other addicts find recovery. NA has been growing since the 1950s because of members working together to further NA's primary purpose. Many of us are familiar with the group's power to carry the message of recovery to addicts coming to our meetings, and we use groups of members in service in the same way. We can see our First Tradition at work when members put their individual wants and needs aside for NA's common good. Working together to make NA more visible and viable in our local communities not only helps addicts find our program, it is also a powerful way of practicing the unity described in the First Tradition.

Attraction ...

The attractiveness of the behaviors and attitudes of individual NA members and the collective appearance of our fellowship is essential in making our public relations efforts more valuable. Attraction means that we function (as members and as groups) in ways that naturally draw others to us. When members act in a way that is attractive, newcomers and potential members are more likely to get a positive impression of NA.

We can also think about attraction as it relates to those—who may not be addicts—who help addicts find NA. Our individual attitudes have an effect on our collective appearance. How do we help professionals become aware of what NA has to offer? We cannot expect nonaddicts to fully understand addiction in the same way we, as addicts, do. What we can do is illustrate the power of recovery within the NA program to those who are not members.

What is likely to be attractive to the public and to professionals who interact with addicts is reliable communication, responsibility, commitment, and behavior that reflects recovery. We can demonstrate the reliability of NA by showing up and fulfilling the obligations we make, whether it is to return a telephone call for information about NA or supplying meeting directories at a public library. We can learn to draw on the experiences of NA members to fulfill the commitments we make to professionals. In the event that something prevents us from our keeping an appointment, we can ask a fellow member to fulfill our commitment for us and notify the person with whom we have the commitment to let them know someone else will be coming in our place. We can also maintain good communication within our committee by staying in contact with the committee chairperson. We need other NA members to be truly successful in building and maintaining relationships with the public. Cooperation and collaboration in our areas and committees can help us provide an attractive message of recovery to the public.

... Rather than promotion

When thinking about the difference between promotion and attraction, it may be helpful to think about the difference between informing the public about NA and insisting that NA is better than any other recovery program. The essay on the Eleventh Tradition in *It Works: How and Why* describes promotion as “fanfare, overblown claims, [and] celebrity endorsements.” Informing the public that we are a credible program of recovery is a principled action, whereas comparing NA to other programs or approaches, offering recovery incentives, or making claims about our effectiveness can all be considered promotion. The only promise we make is the opportunity for addicts to experience freedom from active addiction; guaranteeing any other outcome is promotion.

Promoting Narcotics Anonymous doesn’t need to be an option for us because the program speaks for itself when we humbly and honestly share how NA is working in our lives. Consistently providing services to the community and to professionals, letting the public know about NA and what the NA program has to offer is a way for our service efforts to make our program more attractive to the public and to potential members.

As outlined in the essay on Tradition Eight in *It Works: How and Why*, we perform our service work energetically, and we seek to carry the message of recovery throughout our cities, towns, and villages. We take vigorous steps to attract still-suffering addicts to our program. We have faith in the effectiveness of our fellowship. We know that NA works because we have experienced it working in our own lives. We know that any addict seeking recovery in NA can find the same freedom we have found.

Self-support

Our first experience with the Seventh Tradition may be when the basket is passed at the meetings we attend. Our contribution in a meeting may have been the first time we experienced feelings of responsibility and a growing sense of belonging to something bigger than ourselves. Yet, a broader definition of NA's principle of being fully self-supporting means that our organization is sustained by our own energy through member donations and service efforts. We don't solicit for financial contributions from the public. When we practice the Seventh Tradition, the spirit of self-support encourages responsible actions, anonymity, and integrity in our relationships with the public.

Self-support and public service announcements

We are a not-for-profit organization; therefore, we are often offered charitable rates on things like group meeting-space rentals or public service advertisements, such as radio spots or public transit placements. We may fear that when we aren't charged for a thirty-second spot on a radio program or for an informational NA poster in a train station, we are not being self-supporting. Public service announcements are often available to charitable organizations. In these situations, the media is providing the public with a service through these announcements. Public service announcements do not compromise or jeopardize our principle of self-support. These are opportunities that the public creates for community service organizations. What we offer the still-suffering addict in NA has a benefit to society. Accepting charitable rates and discounts that are offered to other similar community service organizations is in keeping with the principle of self-support.

In fact, this example of public service announcements can be an opportunity for us to build a cooperative relationship with members of the public in our community. This offering of services to charitable organizations is a way that public organizations and businesses enter into cooperative relationships within the community. By combining our efforts with these organizations and taking a team approach, we demonstrate our ability to cooperate. We are not attaching ourselves or affiliating ourselves with these organizations. Rather, we can enter these relationships based on the spirit of cooperation.

Self-support and nonaddicts

Just as we are permitted to accept free public service announcements and discounted rates for meeting space, we may accept help from nonaddicts. This volunteering of services by nonaddicts may be considered a typical part of their community service. For example, a healthcare professional may offer to volunteer time to NA by sitting in on an inventory session to discuss challenges both parties are facing in finding ways for addicts to easily reach NA. In this example, there is a distinction between services that are normally billable (such as a nonaddict accountant offering to manage a local committee's bank records) and a relationship that benefits both NA and the outside party. When both parties are benefiting from the cooperative interaction, and are closer to reaching their mutual goals, then both parties involved equally support the relationship. NA is not being given any special treatment by accepting this volunteer service from a nonmember. Instead, NA is merely one of many not-for-profit organizations that can obtain a volunteer's time. When considering using a nonaddict volunteer, local NA communities can ask themselves the following questions: Will accepting this service give the person or organization undue influence over NA? Will accepting this service make us reliant on this person or organization? Undue influence can also be avoided by asking if the service being offered benefits both NA and the outside party.

In understanding the principle underlying the Seventh Tradition, practical simplicity walks hand-in-hand with our faith in a Higher Power. So long as we take direction from that Power, our needs our met. Likewise, the decision to decline outside contributions, meeting the group's need from the group's own resources, is based firmly in faith.

It Works: How and Why

Self-support and cooperation

Our experience has shown that as the public gains more knowledge about NA, they become more inclined to offer their support. Often this support is expressed through referring clients, family, or friends to the NA program. They refer people to us because they support our organization's mission. This type of rapport builds relationships with the public founded on trust and goodwill.

Often, we will find that the question we need to ask ourselves is if we are doing all we can do in the relationships we have formed with those outside of NA. It would be good if professional and community organizations that want to help addicts get clean feel that NA is available, willing, accessible, and helpful. Self-support means more than just carrying our own financial weight—it means that we fulfill our responsibility to provide information about our program and engage in meaningful relationships with others who have similar goals.

Another way that those outside of NA may lend their support is through helping us reach suffering addicts. Sometimes professionals help carry information about NA's message of recovery because they know that the NA program of recovery is credible.

“Self-support means more than just carrying our own financial weight—it means that we fulfill our responsibility to provide information about our program and engage in meaningful relationships with others who have similar goals.”

There are people outside of NA who help start recovery meetings in homeless shelters; there are professionals who help make recovery literature available to incarcerated addicts. Those outside of NA who share with others what they have seen working in the lives of addicts are a testimony to the power of recovery that our program offers. There are many ways to ensure that the NA message continues to reach addicts, and sometimes advocates outside of NA help further our primary purpose.

There are limits to the amount and kinds of support we can accept from the public. There have been times when family or friends of NA members have been so overwhelmed with gratitude for the recovery of their loved one that they have offered financial support to

NA. We understand this, and we appreciate their good intentions. But we don't accept financial contributions from nonmembers, even from the grateful members of an addict's family. We put ourselves at risk of compromising the autonomy of NA and the spirit of the Seventh Tradition when we accept monetary contributions.

There are, however, many other ways in which nonaddicts can help us fulfill our primary purpose. We can encourage them to buy NA literature and donate it to detoxification

centers, treatment centers, or correctional institutions. We can encourage them to volunteer at community agencies that serve addicts. And we can encourage them to help addicts they know by purchasing NA literature for them. These are all ways in which we can encourage our supporters to act on their compassion without compromising the spirit of our Seventh Tradition.

Cooperation, not affiliation

Cooperating means that we work together; it means that we associate with one another in actions that benefit all those involved. When we cooperate, we willingly help someone who requests our assistance. In NA, this may mean supporting a struggling committee from another area when they ask for help with our ideas and our time. We are here to support one another. When we work with each other and with our communities, we are able to take positive steps that help make our message more available.

How can we work with the public and other organizations without merging or affiliating with them? One of the ways in which we practice cooperation is by remembering that NA members are responsible for observing the principles of our traditions. Facilities and other organizations do not have this responsibility. We can practice this responsibility by following our own principles, relying on our service committees, and studying NA's traditions and concepts.

We are more likely to form productive and cooperative relationships when we simply and honestly review what services we can and cannot offer to others. For example, if we are forming a relationship with a treatment or correctional facility, we ask about their expectations of NA. Maybe they have requested weekly meetings and, after an honest assessment, we decide that we cannot meet their request. Instead, we can offer a meeting on a monthly basis. In this manner, we create a relationship that we can responsibly sustain over time. We practice cooperation by being honest about what we are able to provide, and we still find a way to respond to requests. As a result, public organizations learn to trust our members and rely on our program as a credible community resource.

Another aspect of cooperation is when organizations outside of NA want to research the effectiveness of our program. NA members may decide to cooperate in outside research projects. If this is the case, there are some points to consider. First is that healthcare professionals rely on independent, objective data about effective treatment outcomes to

“We are more likely to form productive and cooperative relationships when we simply and honestly review what services we can and cannot offer to others.”

make decisions about their patients' recovery options. When information about NA is missing from the databases relied upon by professionals, it is a stumbling block for referrals. Research has the potential to open doors for addicts, but NA has no control over what kind of data is collected or how it is used. We have much to learn about cooperating with outside research, and we don't have much experience to draw on. We can remain open to gaining more experience and to learning how to cooperate with those who conduct research.

On a rare occasion, an area or region could decide to conduct its own internal research of the NA program in its locale. Although members are free to participate in research, this is something an area can discuss. A service body can decide to provide a forum for members to discuss this issue if they are feeling uncertain about research that is occurring in their community. Members are more likely to stay

informed and aware about research of NA if local NA communities provide the opportunity for open discussion.

An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Tradition Six

Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Tradition Ten

A big part of our credibility comes from the fact that we maintain our single focus of recovery from addiction. We can be seen as credible, and we can be present in an organization's decision making, but the only way we can be drawn into public controversy is if we offer an opinion on an issue outside the scope of our own program. If a facility wants us to endorse or lend our name to its program, or an organization requests our support on a piece of legislation, we refrain. If we become involved in an outside organization's decision-making process, such as sitting on a board for a nonprofit agency as a representative of NA, we offer no opinion on the organization's business practices. We do not take sides on an outside issue, and we do not put NA at risk or compromise the clarity of our message. If we took one side or another on a legal issue or a medical practice, we would undermine our credibility and our primary purpose. We work to avoid being identified as taking any side or giving an opinion in a controversy. We stay focused only on how we can help those suffering from addiction. This focus allows us to build relationships where our role is clear and free of controversy.

Our experience has shown that we have many nonaddict friends who can advocate for NA. If a professional wants to support NA by sharing about the effectiveness of our program, they are free to do that. What we can do is try to ensure that the nonmember's enthusiasm for our program doesn't misrepresent the addict-to-addict nature of our program. NA is not a program where professionals treat addicts, although professionals often want to advocate for NA's viability because they have seen recovery working for their clients or loved ones. The role of the local service body in a situation like this is crucial. The NA community can provide training and establish accountability with the nonmember supporter; this way the nonmember supporter can become an asset to NA in fulfilling its primary purpose.

One of our public relations goals is to build long-lasting relationships that further our primary purpose through the pursuit of those mutual goals we may share with other organizations. Compromising any of our traditions in an effort to build these relationships is never beneficial to individual members or NA as a whole. We maintain a consistent focus on our primary purpose with the public. By creating positive relationships with those outside of NA and with our own members, we foster unity and harmony with each other and the community around us. We put the common welfare of NA first, and we remember that we are only autonomous as long as our actions do not affect NA as a whole.

Personal responsibility as a member

Our personal interactions with the public have the potential to affect the way members of the public view NA as a whole. As recovering addicts, we interact with the public in our daily lives. And we are often faced with public relations opportunities when we least expect it. We may have decided to share our recovery with our doctor. Although we hadn't expected an NA service opportunity, it may dawn on us that the PI committee could target other local doctors in our community. We could bring this information to our local service committee and discuss how to proceed with this contact. A situation like this demonstrates how members can take responsibility to follow up with the local service committee on an unexpected public relations opportunity.

The accountability of our service committees

Our entire service structure is based on the spiritual principle of accountability. We go to the appropriate service body to seek direction for our public relations efforts. Service bodies, which were created by groups to provide services on their behalf, maintain accountability through their collective conscience and communication with NA groups. There should be no such thing as an unaccountable service body.

We can further foster accountability by working with others in service. We can perform these services in a way that gives a Higher Power an opportunity to work through our group conscience. Local committees can work together, through the process of a group conscience, to create opportunities for a Higher Power to influence services. By working with the area committee, we are less likely to let our personal agendas be the driving force of our service efforts.

There are responsibilities that accompany the principle of accountability. These responsibilities apply to all parties engaged in an accountable relationship. A committee has responsibilities to fulfill to the area service committee, and the area committee has a responsibility to its committee. For instance, if a convention committee is accountable to a regional service committee that means that the regional committee has agreed to take on certain responsibilities for that committee. If the committee encounters challenges such as financial crises or problems with NA's public image during an event, the service body needs to take constructive steps to help the convention committee. It is helpful for service bodies like areas or regions to understand and accept this responsibility before creating subcommittees. This understanding can encourage regions and areas to be proactive in their role with committees that are accountable to them. Requesting financial budgets and asking questions of committees encourages accountability and can help avoid larger problems in the future. Remaining within budget guidelines and maintaining accurate financial records may save an NA community the embarrassment of having to contact an accountant, a lawyer, or even the police. Accountability may also save us from having to cancel other services because we have overspent our budget.

Delegation is another aspect of providing accountable and responsible services. Just as groups have delegated responsibilities to service committees, those service committees can delegate appropriate responsibilities to members. When we delegate responsibility, we expect members or committees to be accountable and keep the larger service committee abreast of their activities. At the same time, the larger service body practices trust by not micromanaging or trying to control the responsibilities they have delegated to another body or another member. It may be in the best interest of a public relationship to have the point person who is in contact with the public remain in that position even after their term is up.

This could be beneficial both to NA and to the public organization. The area will be best suited to make this decision based on their needs.

Sometimes we fear that delegation will mean a loss of control over our services. Together, Concepts One, Two, and Three have been designed to help us maintain responsibility for our service structure without tying our trusted servants' hands.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

“Forever nonprofessional”

During a public presentation, we remember that we are simply trusted servants helping to carry the message of recovery. What does remaining nonprofessional mean in NA's public relations efforts? In NA it is defined as the equality we share. As members, we have an equal place within the fellowship and are equally valued in our efforts to carry the NA message. The principle of remaining nonprofessional also supports the groups' integrity—we are working in service of the group.

Most members may be able to provide information about NA to the public. However, we can also utilize the special skills and talents of certain members. Some of the members in our service community may have public-speaking skills or experience that better fits a particular audience. For example, a member who is also a doctor might better understand the philosophies and vocabulary of the medical community. Forming a panel of members with particular skills and talents, along with other members from various backgrounds, illustrates the range of membership in NA. Using a member's skills in our service efforts adds to how effectively we can communicate information about NA to the public.

Communication

Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.

Concept Eight

Communication is a two-way street. We strive to be effective, honest, open, consistent, and straightforward in our communications. We keep channels of communication open with those we are trying to reach in the public sphere. Communication is not just feedback. It is listening, accepting constructive criticism, and asking questions. Communication is verbal and nonverbal, written and oral, and it affects all of our public relationships. Good communication means listening to a member of the public after we have had an initial interaction. It is the quality of our correspondences and our awareness of various cultural environments.

Above all, our communications are strengthened when we demonstrate integrity, trustworthiness, consistency, and accountability. The principle of integrity applies to all of our service efforts. In our communications, integrity means we present information in a clear and honest way, even in very challenging situations. Trust creates unity in our service committees and confidence in the public. Trust is built when we are accountable for what we say and do. It is our behaviors and actions that communicate most clearly to those around us. Our integrity is expressed when we strive to practice NA's principles in all of our affairs; it is demonstrated in all that we do, and all that we don't do. We need to

remember that we communicate when we take no action. Communication is more than the words that come out of our mouths. Communication is listening, following up, and responding; it is how we carry ourselves through our service work and into the public.

Communication can be considered the foundation of all the principles that support our public relations efforts. As we begin dialogues with each other about how to bring the principles of our program into our services and daily affairs, our public relations efforts have already begun. The image we present to the public begins long before we contact an organization to make a presentation about Narcotics Anonymous. Often, the first impression of NA is made when a member of the public sees us standing outside a meeting facility. NA's image is affected by the ways individual members live their lives.

Taking a moment to reflect on the underlying principles of our program and how our actions can demonstrate those principles will provide our service efforts with a strong foundation. We can begin by opening our minds and initiating a dialogue with members in our areas. Working with a group of addicts to carry NA's message can be an incredibly rewarding and meaningful experience. When we come together and do the right thing for the right reason, we often begin to feel a growing sense of our own purpose and the purpose of NA as a whole.

EFFECTIVE SERVICES

This chapter outlines ways to provide effective public relations services. Included here are a variety of **planning tools**, ideas for how to **structure services** more effectively, and **communication strategies**. These approaches are intended to help an area discover what they need in order to build effective public relations service. The idea is for areas to take what works for their local services and leave the rest.

The focus of this chapter is the area service committee, since members of the area committee are more likely to be the ones providing local services. The planning processes described in this chapter can be easily adapted for use by regions, zones, or any service body. Members are encouraged to modify and adapt these steps to fit their service body.

We offer this information to help areas provide public relations services that are less reactive and more proactive. Planning can help areas move away from thinking that there is only one “right” way to provide services for Narcotics Anonymous. We can all agree on the goal of service in NA: to reach still-suffering addicts. With this as our motivation, we try to identify the best way for *our* service body to achieve that goal.

If services are to be effective, then our efforts and goals need to be clearly defined and focused. Effective services mean that members understand their roles and responsibilities in meeting service goals. It means that areas have created service goals by first considering the needs of the community, current priorities of the area, and available resources. Effective services apply to how the entire area service committee and its committees organize and plan services.

Public relations planning

Planning means that we identify goals and clarify members’ roles in reaching those goals. It is much easier to provide effective services if everyone involved understands their tasks, their responsibilities, and the desired end result. An area may or may not need all of the following planning methods—they are provided so areas can make choices about which processes will work best for them.

Key topics

PR planning

Service structure and effective services

Communication and effective services

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips

Inventory local services

Inventory current services

An inventory can help an area see its strengths and weaknesses. It can help identify what is being done well and what needs improvement. An area can use the inventory process to more objectively examine the services currently being provided. Through its inventory, an area may discover that they have a strong training and orientation process for phonline volunteers. Members may find that the phonline committee utilizes experienced members and performs mock phone calls in the training of new members. The area may discuss and decide to use some of the phonline committee's training methods for other subcommittees and projects.

Looking at what needs improvement is just as important. There are bound to be areas where the service body's ability to provide public relations service is weaker than others. Working to strengthen those weaker areas is an important part of providing effective services. The ideal is for our PR service efforts to produce results that strive to fulfill our primary purpose in our local community.

While the Eleventh Concept applies directly to the management of funds, it also has implications for the management of all our service resources. Most projects depend as much on ideas, information, conscience, and members' time and willingness as they do on money. If we have the funds needed to carry out a project but lack the time or the ideas, we'd best wait until we've gathered all the needed resources before proceeding. If we don't we will have wasted NA service funds. In responsibly planning and prioritizing our service efforts, we must consider the total resource picture, not just our finances.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Inventory where NA may be needed in the larger community

The area can gather information about the needs of the local community to create services that better meet those needs. This may mean evaluating helpline calls and discovering that there have been a number of requests for information about NA from local community colleges. The area committee may then decide that the priority is to form relationships with college administrators. The area can then work on providing information about NA to local colleges looking for student resources. This aspect of an inventory allows an area to determine if certain populations still need to be reached. If existing efforts are not meeting the larger community's needs, then the service body may decide to take action to reach a particular population of potential members.

Priorities

Prioritization involves evaluating which service projects seem most needed for furthering NA's primary purpose in a local area. Prioritization may require that, for the greater good of NA, members let go of service projects about which they are personally passionate. Inviting all interested trusted servants to participate in prioritizing an area's projects helps focus on the broader services needed, rather than the desires of individual subcommittees. Involving all of an area's trusted servants also helps to inspire in those trusted servants a sense of responsibility for the area's future projects.

There are several ways to prioritize. The following steps provide an example of how to prioritize service projects using a ranking system:

- 📄 Make a list of all desired projects. Place this list on a wall, on a chalkboard, or somewhere all participants can see it.
- 📄 Trusted servants then rank their top three projects with check marks.
- 📄 When members have ranked the area's projects, all participants review what seem to be the area's highest priorities.
- 📄 After members have had time to reflect on the area's priorities, a careful look at financial and human resources is needed.

Resources

Once public relations service projects are identified, the area will need to find out if there are enough local resources to carry out the prioritized projects. Looking at the human and financial resources needed for each project helps a service body create budgets, timelines, and training based on available resources.

- 📄 **Human resources:** A realistic picture of an area's human resources will help service projects be more successful. In order to assess human resources realistically, the area needs to look at the current experience of involved members and consider the learning curve for newly elected trusted servants. A learning curve means that although trusted servants have been trained for a project or position, they may still need time and support to adjust to their new responsibilities.

An area can also consider that there is often a natural decrease in trusted servants over time. This is often a result of the rotation of positions and the reality that members sometimes have to give up commitments early due to personal circumstances. Realistically considering human resources can help when planning service projects.

The area may discover that they need to recruit members for service projects. Recruiting members into service is an important component in building human resources. Following are some ways to build human resources:

1. **Strive to make service attractive—be a good example.**
2. **Identify members who may have skills, but not much experience, and support their involvement in service.**
3. **Encourage sponsees to participate in service.**
4. **Invite those members who may have been of service in the past to join in current local efforts.**
5. **Create a pool of former trusted servants.**

- 📄 **Financial resources:** An area can also examine local financial resources available for prioritized service projects. Looking at the area's budget at the beginning of the planning cycle will help trusted servants take the larger financial picture into account. The service body will want to determine if financial resources are available for prioritized service projects. One question to consider is if any projects will take funds away from a committee's routine finances (such as for phonelines). The area also needs to make projections about the amount of funding needed for the duration of the prioritized projects. Project timelines can be created to ensure that financial resources will be

available when needed at crucial points during the project. Getting a broader sense of the area's financial needs and resources helps trusted servants better plan for service projects.

“Looking at the area’s budget at the beginning of the planning cycle will help trusted servants take the larger financial picture into account.”

Many areas raise money to fund service projects. Our ideal is for contributions to support our services, but many areas turn to fundraising to make service projects possible. Each area has to make a choice about whether or not to raise funds. The area can take time to discuss the question of whether fundraising is the appropriate and necessary action to take. If an area does decide to undertake fundraising, the area service committee should organize these efforts. Committees are more likely to stay focused

on providing services when they leave fundraising efforts to the area.

Once an area has determined its priorities and evaluated its resources, it is time to identify project goals. These goals are the final outcome of projects. They are the services an area wants to provide to help addicts find NA.

The public relations plan

Begin with a goal

Once an area has identified local PR goals, it will need to plan the actions necessary to reach those goals. One way to find out which steps are needed is to consider the ideal end result of the goal and then work backwards. It is difficult to identify the actions necessary to achieve a goal without having a strong idea about what the ultimate aim will look like. Remember that it is important to establish achievable goals that can be realistically accomplished. The following process can help an area establish the steps required to reach their service goals:




1. **Establish the goal of the project based on prioritized needs and available resources of the area.**
2. **Plan step-by-step actions or approaches to reach the identified goal.**
3. **Use the goal to measure the progress of the project.**

Sample public relations goals

Following are some examples of the kinds of PR goals an area could work toward. This is not a comprehensive list. These examples are just ideas for how to provide more effective PR service.

 **Goal:** Make healthcare workers aware of NA as a credible resource for their clients.

Steps to reach the goal: Trusted servants initiate a relationship with local healthcare workers by mailing an introductory letter and an NA information pack. NA members familiar with the field of healthcare give presentations at local healthcare events. Ongoing contact is maintained through written correspondence, email, and/or phone conversations. NA members regularly supply healthcare workers with meeting directories, NA literature, and reliable contact information. Feedback is gathered through an ongoing dialogue or an evaluation form of whether or not NA is an accessible resource. **Measure the progress of the project:** Review and discuss the feedback from healthcare workers. Evaluate whether or not healthcare workers are aware of NA as a reliable and accessible option for addicts.

-  **Goal:** Establish NA as a trusted resource for local high schools. **Steps to reach the goal:** NA members schedule several presentations at various schools in local school districts and meet with administrators and teachers prior to giving presentations. Trusted servants who got clean at a young age are trained to share information about NA for these presentations. Ongoing contact is maintained through a follow-up “thank you” letter and an evaluation form about the effectiveness of the presentation. NA members regularly supply schools with meeting directories, NA literature, and reliable contact information. **Measure the progress of the project:** Review and discuss completed evaluations. Plan ways to improve relationships and presentations in school settings.
-  **Goal:** Give the public reliable, regularly updated Narcotics Anonymous contact information. **Steps to reach the goal:** Trusted servants are instructed to send their updated contact information through the local website. The website coordinator is in charge of updating the service body with new member contact information. The coordinator is also charged with the responsibility of proactively contacting members every three months to make sure the contact information is still accurate. **Measure the progress of the project:** Evaluate contact information every three months to ensure that it is reliable and updated.
-  **Goal:** To provide local NA members with an education and training program in public relations service. **Steps to reach the goal:** The area service body creates written material for a training program. Experienced members train trusted servants. Short training sessions take place before service committee meetings. **Measure the progress of the project:** Evaluate attendance at training sessions on a quarterly basis, and review training program to ensure that it meets the needs of the area.

The above goals are meant to illustrate the process of identifying goals and creating the approaches necessary to reach those goals. In the practical application of local PR service goals, an area will need to add more detailed and specific directions for each approach. These details usually include timelines, scheduled reviews of progress, and the time necessary to take corrective actions. Corrective actions are steps that help bring the goal of the project back into focus. Adjusting a timeline, reviewing a project plan, and discussing unexpected challenges with the area are all considered corrective actions.

Service structure and effective services

The structure of our services differs from one area to another. This difference often depends on how many NA members are involved, how geographically spread out or close groups are, and what goals the service committee hopes to accomplish. Below are examples of how a variety of service structures can function in order to provide effective services. These are simply examples. It may make sense to use some combination of the examples below or none at all. The point is that local service bodies should coordinate services in ways that work best for them.

Each element of our service structure has its own role to play; all, however, serve together as a team, striving toward a common goal, “that no addict seeking recovery need die without having the chance to find a new way of life.”

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Subcommittee structure

A committee structure is common in NA. In a committee structure, there is usually an administrative committee that handles the business of operating the area meeting, area finances, and area records. Various subcommittees provide specific services for the area. Those employing this type of structure will want to make sure that subcommittees are communicating and supporting each other in reaching the identified service goals.

Some areas have combined two subcommittees in an effort to improve communication and maximize resources. In an instance like this, a function such as phonelines would be included with the public information subcommittee.

A committee structure may also use an **ad hoc committee** or **workgroups** to get specific service projects done. The work of an ad hoc committee or workgroup is limited to a specific period of time; the committee has a single focus, and is accountable to the area.

The use of **coordinators** can also help service committees to cooperate more directly with each other. Coordinators communicate information about current services being provided to each subcommittee. They do not necessarily provide hands-on services but serve more as a communication link between committees. Coordinators can also act as a communication link between regions and areas.

Umbrella structure

In an umbrella structure, services are provided under one overarching umbrella. This could be a total integration of the functions of all area committees (Hospitals and Institutions, Public Information, Phoneline, Activities, and Outreach). Or it may be a combination of two subcommittees that share one pool of resources. If an area uses an umbrella structure, then the service body discusses and decides which services to integrate. An umbrella structure may utilize coordinators (for instance, phoneline service coordinators) to assist with providing services, or an area may find that an ad hoc committee or workgroup would help complete prioritized service projects.

Public relations umbrella: The focus of a public relations umbrella structure is to provide services to those outside of NA. In this structure, members of an area work together to build relationships with public organizations. Instead of dividing into subcommittees, one group of trusted servants considers resources, requests from members and the public, and the NA community's overall needs. A chairperson or coordinator can bring the committee's recommendations to the larger service body for discussion, direction, and consensus. This structure can allow for a more unified and coordinated approach to providing services.

Fellowship development umbrella: This structure is similar to a public relations umbrella except that the focus is on supporting the growth of other NA service bodies. In a fellowship development umbrella, one group of trusted servants provides information, training, and support to other NA areas. This support allows each service body to provide services that best meet the needs in their local community. This structure may be useful in large geographic territories where each area needs to be empowered to provide effective services in their own community.

...We remind you that, of course, your NA community can organize its services in any way that seems fit. Examine the service needs among your areas, experiment, and find out what works best for you... However you decide to coordinate NA services in your community is perfectly alright, even if you don't see it described in an NA service manual, so long as it truly serves the best interests of your NA community and does not conflict with either our Twelve Traditions or our Twelve Concepts for NA Service.

A Guide to Local Services in NA

Flexible service structures

A flexible service structure can often be more effective in providing services. Flexibility helps meet local service needs. We have a common message and approach for providing services through utilizing NA's traditions and concepts. Implementation of services may differ depending on an area's abilities and needs. Every NA community has the ability to create a service structure that will best help them provide effective, efficient, and reliable public relations.

No matter how services are structured, it is important that the structure be accessible for both experienced and inexperienced members. Accessible services means that inexperienced members feel included and that training and orientation for those new to service is readily and consistently provided. It also means that the area has created ways for members with experience to share and pass on that service experience. An area is more likely to have a strong base of trusted servants if there is an accessible place for members to offer their support. An area's ability to be flexible can allow for more members to be of service.

Communication and effective services

Public relations and NA groups

An area's public relations goals can have significant impact on the groups. Thoroughly discussing public relations projects during an area service meeting will help group service representatives communicate the area's discussions and goals to their groups. Area projects may cause an increase in newer members attending meetings. Groups may need to prepare for this influx by developing meeting formats that better serve a large influx of new members. Successful PR projects depend on meaningful group involvement.

Group members should take the time to have step-by-step discussions about the area's PR efforts. GSRs are the communication link between the area and groups and can bring members' concerns or questions back to the area meeting. This link helps keep groups involved and informed. This link also provides a back-and-forth dialogue between the area and groups. Communication helps the area come together to further NA's primary purpose.

Who is the audience we want to reach?

Defining our public audiences can help make communications more effective. Communication is likely to be an essential component in an area reaching its prioritized service goals. Our audiences can be organized into three broad categories: members of the

NA community, potential NA members, and the external public. We will communicate in distinct ways for each audience.

The NA community: Our communications within the NA community can encourage members to be conscious of NA's traditions and concepts. One way to do this is through learning days. Learning days and service meetings can function in the following ways:

1. **provide education regarding the responsibilities of each service position;**
2. **encourage and support trusted servants;**
3. **demonstrate leadership and training; and**
4. **provide traditions and concepts workshops.**

Communication also includes communicating our experience in service with one another. One way for members to communicate their service experience is to have terms of service positions overlap. With overlapping terms, the departing trusted servant has time to train and orient the newly elected trusted servant. We can also contact previous trusted servants about their service experiences. We can create a contact list and keep them involved. The experience of former trusted servants is a valuable resource—they can offer newly elected trusted servants another training and education opportunity.

Potential members: NA members are one of the greatest influences in attracting new members to meetings. We do this by either providing information about the NA program or creating an opportunity for potential members to identify with us. If we are participating in an H&I meeting, we tell prospective members that they, too, can recover in NA if they have a desire to stop using drugs. If we are presenting information at a local high school, we inform students about what NA is and how NA functions. (There is a more in-depth discussion about presentations and building public relationships in Chapter Four.)

External public: Our communications with the external public can show that NA is an effective, reliable, and responsive program of recovery (the *NA Membership Survey*, for

“Honest and open communication with the external public helps NA retain its credibility and supports our ability to provide effective services.”

example, demonstrates that NA is effective in a variety of cultures, countries, and languages). Our communications should be informative and should directly address any misconceptions the public may have about our program. Honest and open communication with the external public helps NA retain its credibility and supports our ability to provide effective services. See Chapter Four for a thorough discussion about initiating relationships and creating presentations for the external public.

How do we communicate?





How we communicate is another crucial element in reaching our area's service goals. We can plan and target our communications for each identified audience. We generally communicate in four different settings:

1. with each other in our meetings and service committees;
2. with professionals and the general public when we are informing them about the program of Narcotics Anonymous;
3. with professionals and the public when we are utilizing their services—public service announcements, meeting space, bus benches—to reach potential members; and
4. directly with still-suffering addicts.

Of course, we are always communicating a message about NA with our personal actions. No matter with whom we are communicating, we are more likely to create a solid, reliable relationship when we plan and target our communications.

Below are possible components of a communication plan. During the planning process, an area may decide that strengthening communication efforts is what is most needed. The communication approaches that follow can be used as simple one-page checklists that address an area's communication needs.

Action plan: *A communication action plan helps trusted servants stay focused on the purpose and approach of each communication with the public.*

-  What do you hope to accomplish with this communication?
-  Who is the intended audience?
-  Why does the committee want to send a communication to this audience?
-  When does the area plan to send the communication?

An action plan can help an area anticipate the best time to communicate with the public. For example, sending newly trained treatment counselors a packet of information about NA before they are settled in their new positions may not be the best time to make this communication. A communication action plan also helps an area be clear about the goal of each communication.

Coordination strategies: Coordination strategies help us work toward a unified approach to providing services within the service community.

Coordination helps members of the NA community stay informed. Coordination strategies also ensure that groups are involved in communication efforts. A committee may decide to send an informational letter to local medical clinics. In planning for this correspondence, trusted servants can consider if they have the appropriate human resources in the event that they are asked to provide a presentation.

“Effective PR service depends on our ability to work together.”

Being prepared and having the necessary human resources are some of the benefits of a coordinated communication strategy.

Communication follow-up: Follow-up ensures that the area maintains an ongoing relationship with the public.

A follow-up checklist can help an area assign a trusted servant to be responsible for maintaining an ongoing relationship with the public. It can also be a record for future trusted servants about how often the area has been in contact with a particular individual or public organization.

Effective public relations service depends on our ability to work together. We can only do this by taking time to talk with and listen to each other. We can stay open to new ideas and encourage experienced members to share their knowledge about how to provide effective services. We can strive to get the most out of the ways our services are structured and the ways that we approach service endeavors. Once our local services have a solid foundation, we put our plans into action.

Resources

Area planning tool

Service assessment tool

PREPARATION AND TRAINING FOR INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC

This chapter focuses on how to prepare for and build relationships with any public audience. Contained here are training materials and general practices for trusted servants. Detailed information pertaining to specific audiences (such as criminal

justice, healthcare, etc.) is contained in later chapters. The information outlined in this chapter is essential in *any* public interaction. These are our best practices in forming valuable and lasting relationships with the public.

We can show a public audience that we are reliable and knowledgeable by preparing and training for our interactions with them. We want the public to know that we can follow through on our commitments and that what we say is accurate. Preparation and training can help our public interactions improve even if we consider ourselves as having experience with public relations service.

Key topics

Core PR principles

Preparing & training for
public interactions

Presentations

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips

Core public relations principles

Establishing a common set of principles can help trusted servants learn how to interact with public audiences. Shared values, such as trustworthiness and respect, can guide us in a more unified approach to our public relations efforts. The following values or attitudes can be helpful to committee members who may coordinate and participate in public relations projects, and to trusted servants who will be trained to do specific public relations tasks.

Strong relationships are ongoing. An ongoing relationship includes consistent dialogue. If we have decided that forming a relationship with a local organization that helps addicts is a priority, then we continue to stay in touch with that organization after an initial presentation. We present accurate information about NA, follow up after the presentation, and provide the organization with reliable ways to make contact with members in the local NA community.

Strong relationships are flexible. Just as we may ask public organizations to respond to our needs with flexibility, we can work to adapt to their needs. We can listen to what is being asked of us and evaluate whether or not we are able to meet the organization's needs. In some instances, flexibility may mean finding a different way to provide services. We can ask members of the area service body for ideas about how to respond to requests. We always try to respond in a manner that

maintains the relationship with the public while still considering our own abilities and abiding by NA's traditions and concepts.

Strong relationships are trustworthy. The trust we build with the public is a result of consistent, reliable, and diplomatic service efforts. Our traditions and concepts guide our fellowship to act with integrity—we have one very clear goal of helping still-suffering addicts find freedom from active addiction. Our ability to act with integrity makes it easier for public organizations to trust our work. When members understand and follow NA's traditions, our relationships with the public are more likely to be based on this trust.

Strong relationships benefit both NA and public organizations. Effective public relations service comes from our ability to work with other organizations. If we are initiating a new relationship with the local police, then we keep in mind that one of the police department's goals is to make the community safer. Our goal is to help addicts find recovery. One result of addicts finding recovery is that the tendency of addicts to commit crime is lessened, often resulting in a safer community. We use these common goals as a basis of our relationships.

Strong relationships are respectful. When NA members treat each other with respect, that respect is carried into our relationships with the public. We learn about the values of the organization or individuals with whom we are interacting. That kind of respect makes it more likely that the organization will respect our values. If we have a conflict with an organization, we have our traditions, concepts, and a group conscience to guide us. We can inform the organization about our traditions in a considerate and respectful manner.

Preparing and training for public interactions

Preparing and training for relationships with the public includes considering who we are interacting with, and defining and practicing how we will be communicating in those interactions.

With whom are we interacting?

How we communicate depends on the audience. We consider the knowledge, values, and experience of our audience. We may communicate with an audience through written correspondence or through a presentation. Regardless of how we will be communicating (which will be discussed in the next section), we will need to find out about our audience. We can create correspondence and presentations based on what we find out about an audience. Taking time to learn about the organization with which we would like to form a relationship will help us communicate in a way that best reaches that organization.









As NA groups, service boards, and committees, we deliberately and energetically cultivate good public relations, not as a result of our normal activity but as a way to better carry our message to addicts.

It Works: How and Why

What do we know about them?

Just as NA has a primary purpose and set of traditions and concepts, we can research the mission or goals of the organization we will be interacting with. This information can help us to communicate in a way that takes into consideration the goals we may have in





common with a public organization. The following list can help members have a solid idea about the values and aims of an identified public audience.

-  We have identified the organization's goal or mission.
-  We understand the organization's professional practice or discipline (such as a legal practice, medical practice, etc.).
-  We have considered if the organization has known philosophical differences with NA's approach (such as a drug replacement approach to addiction, etc.).
-  We understand the organization's relationship with potential members—if they primarily interact with addicts, the ways they can affect potential members, and whether or not they are required to interact with addicts (such as criminal justice, healthcare, and schools).
-  We have researched the demographics of the organization—we know their culture and language.
-  We have learned if the organization serves various language groups.

After we have considered the previous points, we can decide if a mutually beneficial relationship is possible with this organization. We gain a better understanding about how to communicate with the organization and about whether the organization is likely to cooperate with us. We may also have a clearer picture about what the organization is likely to gain from a relationship with NA.

What do they know about us?

Thinking about what an organization knows about NA can help us communicate with our audience. The following list will help us get a clear idea about what information trusted servants need to include in their interactions with the public, what knowledge the audience already has, and perhaps some of the audience's hesitations about forming a relationship with us.

-  We know if the organization has relationships with other self-help programs or if they are familiar with the twelve-step approach.
-  We have considered the organization's knowledge and perception of NA.
-  We have researched if the organization has had experience with NA and how that experience might affect our current relationship.
-  We have thought about what the organization expects of us and have clarified the nature of our relationship with them.

Whom do we contact within an organization?

Once we have researched our audience, we figure out who is the best person in the organization to contact. First, we consider if there are NA members who may have experience with the organization. These NA members may know whom to contact and if it's best to make a phone call, send an email, or write a letter. A member who has experience with an organization may also be able to introduce us to an appropriate contact person.

We can also find ways to identify the decision makers in the organization, so we know the best people to communicate with throughout the organization. We can consider if the designated contact person is a decision maker and if we have friends (other than our initial contact person) inside the organization. We also want to understand the individual responsibilities of those within the organization. This may seem like a lot of work, but this planning can often be more important than the actual communication. Thoughtful

preparation can help build relationships and make our efforts become more effective in reaching addicts.

Our Twelfth Step says, in part, that “having had a spiritual awakening,” we individually “tried to carry this message to addicts.” Our collective service efforts arise from that same spiritual foundation. Having experienced the results of this program in our own lives, we join together to carry the recovery message further than we could individually.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

How will we be interacting?

Now that we’ve researched the organization we will be interacting with, we can use that information to shape the way we communicate. We can communicate through a written letter, email, a phone call, a meeting, or a presentation. Presentations require more in-depth preparation and training, but all interactions need to consider the following points.

Create a dialogue. One of the most important things we can do when initiating relationships with the public is to create a dialogue. A dialogue implies an exchange of ideas. We offer information about NA, and we listen to what the public organization has to offer us. We use a dialogue to create realistic expectations about our local resources and the kind of relationship that can be maintained. We set up clear roles between NA and the organization.

A dialogue also means inviting the members of the public to provide us with constant feedback about how we are doing. We can do this through consistent follow-up, asking questions like “Are we still meeting your needs?” “Have your needs changed?” Because keeping this dialogue going is so important, we can create an internal reminder system so we are sure to keep following up. This reminder system can be as simple as designating one member to be accountable for following up with public contacts. This member may want to store public contact information on a computer and program the computer to give periodic reminders to follow up with various public contacts.

Use familiar language. We want to communicate with our audience. We can do this by using language that an audience will understand. Language choices are critical in creating clear and effective communications for various audiences. We want to address any language differences between NA and the organization. We use respectful, clear, and direct language in our communications.

Whether we are sending a written announcement or meeting with the director of a public organization, thinking about what kind of language to use will help us speak to that audience. We will want to refrain from using “NA language” in our communications. Not everyone in a public audience will understand what we mean by “ASC chair” or “home group.” Someone who is not familiar with NA terminology should be able to easily understand our communications; we should work to be professional and courteous. This means that we may seek help from members who have some writing experience when preparing written communications for the public.

Appearance. There is a fine line between showing respect for an audience through our appearance and presenting ourselves as something that we are not. When preparing for an initial interface or an informational meeting, we want to choose clothing that suits the setting. Some of us feel that changing our dress is somehow compromising who we are. Another way to look at dressing appropriately is that clothing choice is a way of showing an audience respect. We can think about it like a job interview: We dress appropriately to make a positive impression. We gain credibility when we are able to play by the rules of those with whom we are interacting. An initial impression can be lasting. We want our audience to remember NA as a beneficial program of recovery. At the same time, we don't want to require that members dress a certain way and present a false image of NA. Inviting a variety of members for presentations would more accurately represent the diverse membership found in NA.

Rehearse. Preparing for introductory interfaces and informational meetings is another way of conveying NA's message to the public. Just as inappropriate attire may distract an audience from the NA message, confusing communications and unprepared meetings distract an audience from hearing what NA has to offer. If we read and reread the materials to be used in the initial interaction, we are more likely to be familiar with and knowledgeable about our material. We can role-play with a mock audience composed of NA members. Role playing can help us anticipate some of the questions that may come from the audience. The goal is to leave the public with accurate information about NA and assurance that our organization and its members are reliable and capable.

Presentations

The presentation material

The goal of presentation material is to leave the audience with two or three important points about the Narcotics Anonymous program. We can use repetition to reinforce important points. And we can prepare handouts that outline the primary messages we want to communicate. There are sample presentation formats in the resources section of this chapter.

We want to be aware of our language choices when presenting to a public audience. We want to be extra careful not to use NA language. For example, a public audience may not understand NA's meaning of the word "fellowship" as clearly as they would "NA members." The goal when creating presentation material is to make it appropriate to the audience. This is where our research will help us form tailored presentation material.

We can also use our research to make NA's message meaningful to an audience. A presentation to healthcare professionals should be tailored to that specific audience. We don't want to overwhelm the audience with too much information. Instead, we want to provide specific, meaningful, and timely data.

We can communicate information about NA more clearly if we create talking points. "Talking points" are the key ideas for a particular presentation (see the next section, "What we want to communicate about NA," for examples of talking points). We can make decisions about

"The goal when creating presentation material is to make it appropriate to the audience. This is where our research will help us form tailored presentation material."

which points are most important to an audience based on our dialogue with and research of that audience.

We want to be sure that supporting materials reflect what we say in the presentation. Supporting materials often include NA pamphlets, the fellowship survey, copies of *The NA Way Magazine*, and whatever else seems appropriate for a given audience. If local information is available (newsletters, surveys, etc.), then those materials would work best at local events. Audiovisual support aides can also strengthen a presentation.

Remember to keep the format of the presentation flexible. A flexible format will keep the audience interested and will help create a dialogue. For example, if members of an audience exhibit puzzled looks, then the trusted servants can ask if everyone is clear about the information being presented. The presenter may then need to explain certain points in a different way or offer new information. This kind of flexibility demonstrates responsiveness and allows for dialogue. Breaking up a large group for small-group discussions, or using question-and-answer sessions, will allow us to hear back from the public audience.

What we want to communicate about NA

Practicing what we want to say about NA is crucial in our public interactions. To be successful with public relations, we need a consistent, well-crafted message. We want to be sure to communicate information like the following to the public:

- 1. A short description of local NA history and NA's overall development;**
- 2. A description of NA—our primary purpose and our sole requirement for membership;**
- 3. The role of the NA group and NA's traditions (a general overview about how groups and service bodies work to forward NA's message of recovery);**
- 4. NA's steps—we provide a brief description of the role of the Twelve Steps in recovery. We explain that the steps contain the spiritual principles of our personal program;**
- 5. We discuss the name "Narcotics Anonymous." We dispel any notions the audience may have that the word "narcotics" in our name means NA is only for those who used opiates;**
- 6. NA is a spiritual, not religious, program; and**
- 7. Where to find NA (phoneline, service office, WSO, website, etc.).**

Communication also includes outlining what NA can and cannot do. We work to help those who are unfamiliar with our program of recovery to understand the principles that underlie the actions of our fellowship. We give nonmembers a snapshot of our traditions: principles like cooperation and self-support. We don't need the public to fully understand our traditions, but we work toward a relationship with the public that honors our traditions.

Providing information about our program of recovery is communication. We share information through our written communications, our recovery and service literature, and our presentations with professionals. We do NA a great service when we clearly state what the Narcotics Anonymous program is. We try to avoid making assumptions that those outside of NA understand our organization. We don't promise that NA will work for everyone, but we offer our experience in seeing the NA program work for many

people from varying backgrounds and experiences. We highlight the diversity of our fellowship and our program—that NA is a global, multilingual, multicultural fellowship.

Following are a few examples of talking points that members might use when communicating about NA to nonmembers in a public setting:

- 📄 *Twelve-step/sponsorship/mutual help:* A professional audience may understand NA as a twelve-step program or a mutual-help program. The Twelve Steps refer to what the program is based on, and sponsorship refers to how the Twelve Steps are applied. Mutual help refers to a peer approach rather than a professional-to-addicts approach.
- 📄 *Spiritual approach:* The NA program is based on the practical application of spiritual principles in everyday life. For example, a member may not believe in God but may gain their freedom and hope from active addiction with the Twelve Steps or the group.
- 📄 *NA is a program based on spiritual principles:* The principles of NA’s program are able to cross cultural boundaries. This is gained by working NA’s Twelve Steps. Through working the steps, each member can gain their own experience with principles like honesty or faith.
- 📄 *What a newcomer can expect at an NA meeting:* Meetings often function in the following fashion: A newer member may be asked to say their name, members might share about the program working in their lives, and groups usually close with a circle and prayer.

**“...we work toward
a relationship with the
public that honors
our traditions.”**

The presenters

It is important to choose a panel of presenters who represent a realistic picture of the NA community. We can do this by inviting a mix of members. We want to take a team approach in our presentations because we don’t want one person to represent NA. We work together and support each other when presenting NA to a public audience. We want the public to see that we are a diverse group of volunteers.

We need to consider who in our NA community is best suited to do the presentation. We try to match presenters with an audience. Some NA members will be better at presenting than others. Presenting is not simple; it takes time and preparation. We may decide to encourage people who lack presenting skills to volunteer for other service positions, or we may provide training for members so they can improve their presentation skills.

**“We want to take
a team approach in
our presentations...”**

Presenters can look at the Fourth Concept to be clear about the leadership role they are about to undertake. A question-and-answer session at the end of a presentation is a time when presenters may get asked questions that go beyond NA’s scope. This is a situation where leadership qualities can be important. If a presenter is asked to give a television interview or state NA’s position on an outside issue, they should be prepared to say “No comment” and briefly explain why. Rehearsed answers to these questions can allow presenters to say “no” in a way that is respectful.

Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Nonaddict presenters

Two points to consider if we use adequately trained nonaddicts to speak for NA at community events are that (1) they can help us protect our anonymity at local events, and (2) they can advocate for NA using the language of the public audience. We want to be careful of using the same presenters so much that they become the “face” of NA.

Exhibits and booths

If we are not presenting and we are staffing a booth at an event, we take the same considerations of preparation and personal appearance. We want someone to be at the exhibit or booth at all times. We can invite experienced NA members to come join in events, yet we want to be sure to limit the number of members at an exhibit so that the booth isn’t overcrowded; usually, three members are adequate. We provide local NA contact information to those who visit the booth. If a question to which we don’t have the answer is posed, we offer to contact a member in the local NA community to get the answer to their question. We can make it a practice to ask those who visit the booth for their business cards. Getting this kind of contact information will be most useful if we are sure to follow up by sending a letter and information packets about NA. We try to be helpful and reliable when providing information about NA.

The audience

The audience is the reason for giving presentations. We encourage audience participants to network and invite their own contacts. We can also create ways for the public audience to give us feedback on our presentation. An evaluation form that asks participants about the usefulness of the presentation, the effectiveness of the presenters, the values of the material handed out during the session, and if there was anything else that could have been included can help our presentations continue to improve. We can solicit contact information from attendees and be sure to follow up with that contact information.

We can ask NA members to sit in the audience. We can train members from the local NA community by inviting them to observe the presentation and listen to the question-and-answer session. NA audience members can ask the first questions in the question-and-answer session. They can also help set the tone and provide the presenters with encouragement and support.

One of the more important things we can do is to listen to the audience. By listening to the audience, we can respond with more relevant information. We can also get their feedback and begin practicing having a dialogue with this public audience.

Rehearsal and preparation







Practicing with NA members can be a fun way to prepare for presentations. Trusted servants can ask each other the most difficult questions they can think of in a rehearsed presentation. Practicing with a friendly audience of NA members can also help presenters build their confidence. Rehearsing in this way will also ensure that our presentation fits into the allotted time frame.

Another way to prepare for presentations is to rehearse a Q&A session and have prepared answers for what seem to be typical questions. Presenters may also want to find organizations in the local community that offer training in public speaking.

Finally, we will want to be sure that we are aware of the variables at the event: Do we know what to expect from the venue? Do we know how many people are expected to show up? Can we control the temperature and room setup? Are we aware of the presentation start time, so we can be punctual? Are we dressed appropriately?

Organizing presentations

Members who coordinate public relations events and presentations have to keep a broader perspective in mind. The following points can be important when organizing presentations:

-  The local NA community could provide a questionnaire for NA members to find out who has presentation or organization skills.
-  Make sure that the presentation tools and resources are current.
-  Schedule presentations during the time of day most convenient for invited participants.
-  Trusted servants will also want to be sure to coordinate with other committees so the local service body can offer unified support to an event.
-  If the local NA community has decided to use nonaddicts to present, be sure to have oriented and trained them to communicate accurate information about NA.
-  There may be opportunities to set up an exhibit or booth at a local event. We can use this opportunity to seek out future contacts by getting business cards.

Tips for how to make our presentations more successful:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Be prepared | 8. Listen |
| 2. Know your audience | 9. Learn to “read” the audience |
| 3. Keep it local—bring local materials | 10. Send a thank-you letter |
| 4. Be knowledgeable about NA resources | 11. Survey the audience |
| 5. Be enthusiastic | 12. Use feedback to improve for next time |
| 6. Keep the presentation within the allotted time frame | 13. Share information about NA and minimize personal experience |
| 7. Be simple and direct | |

Our interactions with the public can become even more successful when we take some time to plan and prepare for them. Our primary purpose is to carry NA’s message to addicts around the world—many members of the public are more than happy to help us fulfill this purpose. We can do our part by presenting clear, reliable, and meaningful information about what NA is and how NA can help addicts.

Resources

Sample correspondence letter
Sample referral letter
Sample frequently asked questions
Sample presentation format
Use of the PI basics, meeting schedules, phoneline
Area PR roundtable format

Organizational contact suggestions

Following is a list of general public organizations. Each chapter will provide a list of contacts that relate to the audience in that chapter (such as treatment, healthcare, and criminal justice).

- ❖ Industry: unions, employee assistance programs, human resource directors;
- ❖ Religious groups: check their church meeting times and office hours to find out when the best times are to make contact;
- ❖ Educational: teachers, colleges and universities, junior and senior high schools, guidance counselors;
- ❖ Service organizations: neighborhood groups, youth groups, social and cultural groups, service clubs, homeless and battered women's shelters, soup kitchens.

MEDIA

Our public relations efforts can be strengthened through the careful use of the media. This means that media projects are planned so that they address the area service committee's greatest needs. This also means that we strive to make our media efforts more responsive and proactive. We can be creative in the ways we use media to address an area's goal of making Narcotics Anonymous more visible. As a result, we are more likely to reach using addicts who may not know about the NA program.

This chapter covers the role of print and broadcast media in our public relations efforts (please see Chapter Ten, "Internet Technology", for information about the Internet). Print media in this context includes newspapers, local magazines, posters, outside advertising, news or feature articles, and opinion pieces. Broadcast media includes public service announcements (PSAs), radio, television (including cable), and film. The questions raised in the planning and preparation section can be used as part of an area service committee's inventory process (discussed in detail in Chapter Three) before beginning new public relations efforts.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & the media

**Planning & preparation for
areas & committees**

Putting your plan into action

**Discussing & addressing
known challenges in media**

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion

Anonymity with nonaddicts

Tradition Eleven emphasizes that no one personality is more important than another. When our Eleventh Tradition tells us that "we need always maintain personal anonymity," it does not say that we need to do so under all circumstances. Tradition Eleven says that "we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films." This public is carefully outlined within our Eleventh Tradition as the press (print and electronic media), radio, and films.

If we are asked to participate in a radio talk show about recovery in NA, for instance, we are strongly encouraged to seek support from experienced NA members in our service community; discuss, plan, and rehearse our presentation with committee members; and represent Narcotics Anonymous with another NA member.

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Tradition Eleven

There may be times when nonaddicts can help us protect our anonymity as recovering addicts in the public media. Those outside of NA often have the ability to enter media venues in a manner that can help further our primary purpose. For example, a judge may talk about their positive experience with NA, describing how hundreds of addicts have changed their lives because they started to attend NA meetings, and speaking about the effectiveness of our program of recovery. We are not asking nonaddicts to carry NA's message, we are asking them to speak about our message of recovery. The role of nonmembers is to simply carry information about NA.

A nonaddict professional helps members to retain their personal anonymity with the press and protects any individual NA member from being considered a spokesperson for Narcotics Anonymous. We don't risk our program's credibility as much, since a nonaddict is completely separate from our membership. Members can also maintain the focus of carrying NA's message instead of becoming overwhelmed with representing NA in the media. Nonaddict professionals, like judges, are often inclined to discuss their experiences with our program. It is our responsibility to make sure that these members of the public are well-informed and that they have had a positive experience with NA.

- 📖 Why is anonymity important when representing NA in the media?
- 📖 How can we practice the principle of anonymity—our equality and the importance of our group over individual members—in our media projects?

... Rather than promotion

When thinking about the difference between promotion and attraction, it may be helpful to think about the difference between informing the public about NA and insisting that NA is better than any other recovery program. The essay on the Eleventh Tradition in *It Works: How and Why* describes promotion as “fanfare, overblown claims, [and] celebrity endorsements.” Informing the public that we are a credible program of recovery is a principled action, whereas comparing NA to other programs or approaches, offering recovery incentives, or making claims about our effectiveness can all be considered promotion. The only promise we make is the opportunity for addicts to experience freedom from active addiction; guaranteeing any other outcome is promotion.



- 📖 What is the difference between promoting NA and presenting NA as an attractive program of recovery?
- 📖 Have we confused the need for having strong public relations with promotion?

Self-support and public service announcements

We are a not-for-profit organization; therefore, we are often offered charitable rates on things like group meeting-space rentals or public service advertisements, such as radio spots or public transit placements. We may fear that when we aren't charged for a thirty-second spot on a radio program or for an informational NA poster in a train station, we are not being self-supporting. Public service announcements are often available to charitable organizations. In these situations, the media is providing the public with a service through these announcements. Public service announcements do not compromise or jeopardize our principle of self-support. These are opportunities that the public creates for community service organizations. What we

offer the still-suffering addict in NA has a benefit to society. Accepting charitable rates and discounts that are offered to other similar community service organizations is in keeping with the principle of self-support.

In fact, this example of public service announcements can be an opportunity for us to build a cooperative relationship with members of the public in our community. This offering of services to charitable organizations is a way that public organizations and businesses enter into cooperative relationships within the community. By combining our efforts with these organizations and taking a team approach, we demonstrate our ability to cooperate. We are not attaching ourselves or affiliating ourselves with these organizations. Rather, we can enter these relationships based on the spirit of cooperation.

-  How do we practice the spirit of self-support in our media efforts?
-  When accepting rates offered to community service organizations like ours, how can we ensure that we don't become reliant on or unduly influenced by an outside organization?

Public relations and the media

As discussed in Chapter Three, planning public relations projects will help trusted servants become more effective—and these steps naturally help with any media projects. Often, we initiate service projects because it is the tradition of the area. Instead, we can ask important questions such as: Does the area have enough human and financial resources for the project? Is the media project likely to reach the intended audience? Can the area effectively communicate the project to groups, members, and other service bodies? The questions below can help an area determine if it can sustain a media project and if such a project is the most effective way to reach suffering addicts in that NA area.





The primary purpose of our public relations efforts is to tell the story of Narcotics Anonymous and what our program offers to the still-suffering addict. Our practice of public anonymity is built on the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

It Works: How and Why

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

Does the project match the area's needs and abilities?

The first concern is how the area's needs and abilities match up with the proposed project. The following questions can help an area clarify whether or not a proposed media project forwards the area's goals and if it can realistically be supported by the area's current human and financial resources:

-  Is the proposed media project a result of inventorying the current needs of the community and the resources of the area?
-  Does the area have the human resources for the media project? Has the area considered the current experience of committee members and members of the local NA community?
-  Is the committee prepared for possible media follow-up requests as a result of the project?
-  Has the area communicated intended media projects to all committees and, if appropriate, to neighboring areas?

- ✎ Does the area have a plan for how to manage unfavorable coverage of NA in the media? Are there trained trusted servants who can follow up on negative coverage by providing accurate information about NA?
- ✎ Is the area's phoneline working and equipped with resources sufficient to receive an influx of calls as a result of the media effort? Does the area have members who are able to make Twelfth Step calls? (See the chapter titled "Phonelines" for more information about training phoneline volunteers and making Twelfth Step calls.)
- ✎ Are the area service committee's finances sufficiently stable to support the project? Has the project been factored into the ASC budget?
- ✎ Have ASC funds intended for media projects been lost or misspent before? How can current media efforts benefit from what was learned from those past financial mistakes?
- ✎ Will this project get the most out of the NA funds being spent? Is the project a smart business decision? How is this project a good use of valuable—and limited—NA funds? Does the area need to look around at other options or negotiate better rates?

Is the project likely to reach the intended audience?

The questions below can help an area discuss if a proposed media project is the best way to reach the audience it is meant to reach. These questions can also help an area evaluate which type of media venue is the best choice for a particular audience.

- 📄 Is there any group of addicts not being reached by current PR efforts? (If the area has done an inventory, look there to find out where the biggest need is.)
- 📄 What kind of media project will help the NA community reach that group? For example, a daytime PSA might be appropriate for addicts whose schedules keep them home during the daytime, such as students, whereas a bus bench ad may be more likely to reach addicts who rely on public transportation.
- 📄 How effective were past media projects? How can the area address known challenges or past failures as it plans the current project?
- 📄 What makes a certain broadcast or print venue suitable for this public relations endeavor?

Are NA groups involved?

Media projects can often significantly affect local groups. An area can use the following questions to discuss the impact a media project may have on local NA groups.

- 📄 Have GSRs been given an opportunity to discuss the proposed project?
- 📄 How have groups been informed about current media projects? Have GSRs been informed at the area service committee meeting? Have members of the ASC visited groups to inform them of current media projects?
- 📄 How are groups prepared to support the possible influx of new members?

Our public image consists of what we have to offer, a successful proven way of maintaining a drug-free lifestyle. While it is important to reach as many people as possible, it is imperative for our protection that we are careful about advertisements, circulars, and any literature that may reach the public's hands.

Basic Text

Putting your plan into action

Print projects

Newspapers and **local magazines** can be a cost-effective way to publish a local phoneline number, a list of local meetings, or the address of the local NA website. This project can be a simple way for an area to provide the community with information about NA. An area can often publish information about NA meeting locations at a relatively low cost (or sometimes at no cost).

Leaflets and **posters** are another inexpensive way to make NA more visible in the community. A poster campaign includes choosing where to place posters, contacting facilities to request permission to hang posters, and following up on placed posters. An area may decide to target local hospital emergency rooms or doctors' offices. Ongoing follow-up will ensure that phoneline information and contact information are up-to-date. We want to work with public contacts so that our PR efforts make a positive impact on the community rather than a negative one. This type of communication not only attempts to reach addicts in the community, but it fosters a relationship with the public that has allowed us to place these posters or flyers. These print projects provide people who think they might have a drug problem with a simple and anonymous way to contact Narcotics Anonymous.

An area can also consider if **flyers** for local NA events create a positive image of NA. Flyers containing offensive images and hard-to-read graphics have the potential to negatively affect a member of the public's perception of NA. Clear, simple, and straightforward information (with the NA logo) may help us create more positive relationships with the public.

Outside advertising, such as **billboards**, **transit signs**, and **bus benches**, is commonly used to inform the public about Narcotics Anonymous. Areas are encouraged to be creative in finding the most appropriate outside advertising locations in their community. Outside advertising (other than billboards and bus benches) is often used in various communities around the world. The following points are important considerations an area may want to discuss before deciding to use any of these print venues:

- 📄 Billboards, transit signs, and bus benches can be expensive. What is the cost of placing an announcement? Is the area able to afford this expense? Are these announcements likely to reach the identified group of addicts?
- 📄 What will the announcement say? Be sure to spell out Narcotics Anonymous and to mention drugs in general (for example, *Drug Problem? Call Narcotics Anonymous*). Will the announcement clearly and simply communicate information about NA?

Discussing these kinds of topics will help an area thoroughly plan for a large-scale print project. Thoroughly planning print projects can better help an area service committee achieve its intended results.

If a member, group, or committee is contacted by a **reporter** for an **article**, there are some approaches that can make these interactions more successful.

- 📄 Provide written information about the NA program: create talking points (simple, clear points of information about NA), use NA literature, and provide NA pamphlets or articles from local newsletters or *The NA Way Magazine*.
- 📄 Remember that we offer no opinion on outside issues. For example, if a reporter tries to question us about a needle-exchange program or medical marijuana use, we refrain from commenting.
- 📄 Have a group of addicts participate rather than one individual member.
- 📄 We can request to see an article before it is printed but we must remember that we have no control over how a reporter will depict what we say.
- 📄 We can cooperate with reporters by helping them find a point of view for their article that is in keeping with our traditions. For example, we can highlight the fact that the type of drugs used by an addict doesn't seem to affect that addict's chance at finding recovery. Paraphrasing NA literature can help these discussions.

The approaches above can help areas become more responsive in their interactions with reporters.

Discussing and addressing known challenges in media

Unfavorable media coverage

Planning for how to deal with unfavorable coverage of NA in the media can help areas in their public relations efforts. If the unfavorable coverage is a result of a lack of information, then providing accurate information may help to balance the coverage. In other situations, trusted servants may decide to do nothing and simply continue to provide consistent, reliable information about Narcotics Anonymous in other public relations settings. This may not directly amend the negative press, yet it may indirectly balance the public's perception of who we are and what our program has to offer.

Media and the addict working alone

There is some basic guidance that applies to most public relations efforts in media settings. The first is that members should not do this type of service alone. If a member is unexpectedly contacted by the media, a committee or area should be involved as soon as possible. Trusted servants also need to remember that one member's opinions can be seen as the opinions of NA as a whole. Accountability to a service body ultimately benefits our media efforts.

The situations described above can benefit from having a committee member contact the region or NA World Services.

Broadcast projects

Public service announcements and **public-access television** are ways to communicate with the public, usually at no cost. Both are community services provided by broadcasters or cable-service providers. Communities around the world may have a

variety of ways of including an NA phoneline number or website address on television. A public service announcement, or PSA, can be as simple as a television station announcer displaying a card with a local phoneline number and a script that states, “If you’ve been affected by addiction, you can call this NA phone number.” Trusted servants can explore other available broadcast resources to find creative PR opportunities in their communities. Following are considerations when undertaking a PSA or public-access project:

- 📄 The area service committee can discuss the best time to air a PSA. An ASC or committee can request that a PSA be aired after a documentary about addiction, but it is very uncommon to have any control over when a PSA is aired.
- 📄 Make sure that local members and local groups are aware of the media project and prepared for a possible influx of helpline phone calls or newcomers at local meetings.
- 📄 An area may want to contact the region or the World Service Office about PSAs for broadcast media. The cost of creating videos can easily overwhelm an area’s resources (see Chapter Three for information about how to inventory area resources and effectively plan projects).
- 📄 The information above can also be applied to PSAs that are used on radio shows.

If a committee decides to participate in a **radio** program about NA, one of the most important considerations is that NA is represented by a group of addicts. The following points need to be discussed before participating in radio shows:

- 📄 We prepare talking points about the NA program (see the section in Chapter Four, “What We Want to Communicate about NA,” and addendum material for examples).
- 📄 We also plan and rehearse what we will say if asked questions that fall outside of providing information about the NA program (Chapter Four has resources for interacting with the public).
- 📄 We are sure to invite NA members who are trained for PR opportunities like a radio interview (see Chapter Four for guidelines about how to train members for public relations opportunities). We consider if the panel of members accurately reflects the area’s diversity, including both men and women and offering varying clean time, age, and experience.
- 📄 We are cautious about sensationalizing addiction or sharing the details of our personal story. We can share some details from our personal story for the purpose of identification—but we keep the focus on what NA is and how to find us.

Television, video, and film are media venues where long-term planning and thorough consideration are especially important. Broadcast media can be an opportunity to establish long-lasting relationships where NA is seen as a reliable source of information about recovery from addiction. If broadcast professionals are well informed about the NA program, they are more likely to use NA as a resource. Looking at the needs of the community and the abilities of the area can help trusted servants avoid broadcast projects that seem exciting but actually have little likelihood of helping an addict find NA. The points below outline some of the issues connected with broadcast venues:

- 📄 Since addicts don’t use full-face images to represent NA, we can rely on nonaddict supporters if we are asked to participate in a TV interview. If an area has decided to participate in a TV, video, or film project using a nonaddict, they will want to be sure that the nonmember is trained and working closely with the area.

- Some NA members who have participated in TV or film segments have had success with using specific camera angles, like asking the camera person or producer to shoot from over a shoulder from behind or to take a longer shot from behind. Other members have worked with production companies to set up an interview in which members' voices are played over images that are not pictures of members. We will want to keep in mind that we have no control over how a producer, director, or reporter will actually depict or interpret Narcotics Anonymous. Sometimes, despite our best efforts to thoroughly educate inquirers about our program, information may still be blurred or misinterpreted for reasons that are simply beyond our control.
- If contacted by a reporter, we can always provide written information about NA. If members do decide to answer questions, we want to be sure to give clear and accurate information about the NA program. We can politely decline to answer questions that fall outside of our traditions or that sensationalize or glorify addiction. For example, we are cautious not to discuss the details of which drugs we used, but we can share, for the purpose of identification, some details from our personal story. It's always best to work with a committee when contacted by a reporter.
- An area avoids agreeing to the broadcast of any spots that require a sponsoring organization to be affiliated with NA. For example, we would not endorse a broadcast spot that states that a certain corporation sponsors the message from Narcotics Anonymous.
- If an ASC learns that NA will be depicted in a dramatic film or is contacted by a local production company or television program, then the area may decide to form a cooperative relationship with the filmmakers. If members do decide to participate, the area service committee can then decide what they are able to provide. Trusted servants may ask to read the film's script and discuss with the producers or directors what is wanted from NA. There are times when our principles are at odds with the interests and goals of the media. We do not take part in any media project that is in conflict with our traditions and our desire to effectively carry NA's message. Outside organizations (like production companies) are not responsible to uphold our traditions and there is always the possibility that they may disregard our requests. Working with the region or the World Service Office can allow the area to maintain its focus on supporting its local groups' ability to carry the NA message of recovery in their meetings.

[The Eleventh] Tradition goes on to tell us that we need to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films. This is to protect the membership and the reputation of Narcotics Anonymous.

Basic Text

A **theatrical** production (professional, community, high school, or university) about addiction can be an opportunity for the area to cooperate with an outside organization. The area may want to provide information to a local playwright about addiction by clarifying the nature of recovery in NA and providing information about the NA program. The area can provide the production company with local meeting directories, or buy a spot on the playbill to provide the local NA phonenumber.

Planning our media efforts can make them more beneficial. Our interactions with those who work in the media can also help to establish NA as a responsive and trusted community organization. These outcomes will ultimately help us reach our most important goal: to make NA's message available to all addicts.

Resources

Suggested flyer guidelines

Posters, billboards, bus benches...

Introductory letter for PSA placement

Thank-you letter for PSA placement

Radio PSA scripts

TV PSA scripts

FAQ – media

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

This chapter contains information about carrying NA's message into various correctional facilities (including long-term, short-term, juvenile, and correctional psychiatric units). In the spirit of creating long-lasting relationships with correctional facilities, we encourage area service committees to research, understand, and engage with the personnel at the facility or institution. Our personal conduct—including the way members dress, speak, and interact with correctional personnel—has a powerful impact on NA's relationships with such facilities and NA's public image. Relationships based on mutual respect and understanding are likely to support NA's ultimate goal of reaching suffering addicts.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & the criminal justice system

**Planning & preparation for areas
& committees**

Putting your plan into action

**Discussing & addressing known
challenges in criminal justice**

Drug courts

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion

This chapter also addresses ways to create relationships with drug courts. Many people convicted of nonviolent drug-related crimes are sent to Narcotics Anonymous as a result of court diversion programs. NA communities around the world are finding a growing number of court-mandated addicts attending local NA meetings. The material here contains practical solutions for interacting with drug courts and addicts referred to NA through the criminal-justice system, as well as discussion points for groups about how NA's principles can apply to this influx of court-mandated addicts. The specifics of court diversion programs may vary in different countries, but the principles contained in this section can be applied in almost any situation.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Attraction

The attractiveness of the behaviors and attitudes of individual NA members and the collective appearance of our fellowship is essential in making our public relations efforts more valuable. Attraction means that we function (as members and as groups) in ways that naturally draw others to us. When members act in a way that is attractive, newcomers and potential members are more likely to get a positive impression of NA.

We can also think about attraction as it relates to those who help addicts find NA (who may not be addicts themselves). Our individual attitudes have an effect on our collective appearance. How do we help professionals become aware of what NA has to offer? We cannot expect nonaddicts to fully understand addiction in the same way we, as addicts, do. What we can do is illustrate the power of recovery within the NA program to those who are not members.

- 📖 Why is it important to conduct ourselves in a way that positively affects NA as a whole?
- 📖 What can members do to make NA more attractive to the public?

Cooperation, not affiliation

How can we work with the public and other organizations without merging or affiliating with them? One of the ways in which we practice cooperation is by remembering that NA members are responsible for observing the principles of our traditions. Facilities and other organizations do not have this responsibility. We can practice this responsibility by following our own principles, relying on our service committees, and studying NA's traditions and concepts.

- 📖 How can we work with the public and other organizations without endorsing or affiliating with them?
- 📖 What is our experience (as members and as an area) with cooperating with the public?

Tradition Three

Narcotics Anonymous is open to anyone seeking freedom from active addiction and our public relations efforts need to support that inclusiveness. Our service efforts need to ensure that everyone is welcome in NA—from the householder to the convict. As our Basic Text says, our service efforts should strive to reach all addicts “regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion.”

- 📖 How can we demonstrate the diversity of our program so that members from varying backgrounds feel welcome?
- 📖 How can our service efforts better support the principle of inclusiveness?

Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. We focus on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Our message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, our sole interest is in their desire for freedom from active addiction and how we can be of help.

It Works: How and Why

Public relations and the criminal justice system

Correctional institutions, jails, and prisons

The purpose of bringing panels and meetings into institutions is to carry NA's message to those who cannot regularly attend outside meetings. Our approaches will vary based on the type of facility and the rules of each facility. The specific details of this chapter apply to facilities in the United States, but the underlying methods can be used and adapted to form

relationships with criminal-justice systems all over the world. Members can also adapt these principles and ideas to fit different types of facilities, such as correctional vocational centers and maximum-security institutions. The challenge is to build relationships that honor NA's principles and the facility's rules. Areas may want to seek experience and support from local regions, zonal forums, or NA World Services.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

Committee preparation and training

Clear training methods can help a committee have a positive, long-lasting relationship with correctional facilities. Members should be accountable to a committee when establishing relationships with the criminal-justice system. The following items can help a committee that is planning to enter (or that has already established) a relationship with correctional facilities.

- ✎ Prior to initiating a relationship, the committee has a pool of trusted servants who are willing to be of service. Considering how many members in the area are typically willing to take service positions can help a committee decide how frequently NA will interact with a facility. Trusted servants need to be realistic about the area's ability to provide service to a facility over time.
- ✎ The committee has created a written document for trusted servants that clarifies and communicates the rules of the correctional facility and the guidelines of the committee. Sometimes NA guidelines are different from a facility's rules; be sure to establish guidelines that honor both the institution's rules and NA's principles.
- ✎ The committee informs members that there can be challenges in filling out clearance forms. Clearance forms take time to process and can sometimes require fingerprinting or background investigations. A member is not automatically guaranteed clearance into a facility just because they fill out a form.
- ✎ If a trusted servant cannot fulfill a commitment to a facility, then another of the committee can show up in their absence. If clearance is required for all trusted servants entering a facility, then the committee will want to have both members cleared and have made prior arrangements for the other member to act as a substitute, if needed; if no one is able to fulfill the commitment, then the trusted servant should inform the facility.
- ✎ The committee regularly reviews and updates guidelines or training tools. Trusted servants may want to read portions of their guidelines aloud at each meeting to ensure all trusted servants stay informed. Learning days held on a regular basis can also provide members with training.
- ✎ Clean-time requirements for sharing on panels are established and followed.
- ✎ The committee ensures that there is regular communication between the facility contact person and the NA member coordinating meetings for that facility.
- ✎ If the issue of panel leaders or members taking medication comes up, then the panel leader or committee member can refer to *In Times of Illness* for guidance. This issue is often best left between the member, their sponsor, and their Higher Power. In our public relations service, we may limit the participation of members on certain medications. We do this because we do not want the NA program to be misrepresented. We are a program of complete abstinence, but we want to be inclusive, so we treat these situations sensitively by taking members aside and sharing our own experience with medication and living drug-free.

Training and preparing trusted servants

Working with an area service committee, trusted servants can bring NA meetings into a facility. The goals of meetings are to create an atmosphere of recovery, share information about NA, and share a clear message of NA recovery. Training and preparing panel volunteers is essential for successfully carrying NA's message into correctional facilities. The following points can be helpful when training trusted servants in a criminal-justice setting:

- ✎ Trusted servants understand and agree to follow the facility's rules—including the facility's dress requirements. This often means no jeans and no shirts with logos, including NA logos.
- ✎ Members are asked to share a clear message of recovery in NA. This can mean avoiding old attitudes, like those that may have characterized their own experiences in correction institutions, or offering information other than their experience, strength, and hope of recovery in NA.
- ✎ Members understand that meetings are under correctional officers' control. Trusted servants are trained to follow the facility's guidelines regarding security risks; this may mean that trusted servants will be expected to report to correctional authorities about situations that pose a threat to NA members or that pose a general security threat.
- ✎ Many facilities require volunteers to attend an orientation session. Trusted servants should be prepared to attend one of these sessions, if required by the facility. It is becoming more and more common for facilities to require volunteers to attend these kinds of orientations.
- ✎ Trusted servants understand and follow protocols regarding sponsoring inmates. Some areas and facilities prohibit sponsoring because it may show inmate favoritism. Some facilities have rules concerning communication with inmates. These rules may not allow NA volunteers who regularly enter the facility to be on an inmate's visiting, correspondence, or phone list. In other areas and facilities, it is generally accepted that trusted servants can sponsor inmates. What's important is that NA members are willing to follow the guidelines of both the area and the facility regarding sponsorship. Trusted servants can also refer inmates to correspondence and sponsorship programs run by various NA communities (see the Fellowship Development chapter for more details on these programs).
- ✎ Speaker meetings, panel presentations, questions and answers, and literature-discussion formats work well in correctional facilities. NA speakers usually share their experience in a meeting format with a predetermined time frame. A rotating format can provide a balance between outside NA speakers and inmate participation.
- ✎ Trusted servants understand that any sexual relationship with inmates is totally inappropriate. The primary purpose of providing meetings in a criminal-justice setting is to carry a clear and consistent NA message of recovery. We want to avoid inappropriate sexual relationships or sexual harassment in NA meetings. We also want to encourage inmates to stay focused on NA's message of recovery, not on who is delivering that message.
- ✎ Those who provide service in a criminal-justice setting want to always strive to create an environment where the focus is on recovery, not a friendship between the trusted servant and the inmate.
- ✎ As inmates approach their release date, trusted servants may decide to give them a list of NA phoneline numbers or up-to-date NA meeting directories. Some facilities

offer prerelease classes. If that is the case, trusted servants can arrange to provide information about NA during those classes (see information about newcomer workshops in the drug court section of this chapter).

Stand-alone meetings in correctional facilities

There is a distinction between stand-alone meetings following the *Institutional Group Guide* and meetings brought into an institution by outside members. A stand-alone meeting is usually preferable in a long-term facility. A stand-alone meeting or free-standing meeting is not the same as an H&I meeting, although there may be members from the outside who participate and help support the free-standing meeting. A facility will often require an outside NA member to host a group that operates an NA meeting inside an institution. One way to determine which format would be most appropriate at a given institution is to ask the staff about the needs of the inmates. Step meeting formats can help addicts in long-term facilities get a sense of the NA program of recovery through the Twelve Steps. Free-standing NA meetings in institutions can elect trusted servants. There have been instances where free-standing meetings have joined the nearest area service committee. Elected inmates can act as GSRs and may be allowed to attend area service meetings or consult with an outside member who serves as the GSR, or the institutional group could choose to elect an outside member to attend the area as the GSR.

Coordinating services

There are a variety of ways to coordinate services in correctional institutions. Some areas use the panel-leader format to bring meetings into facilities, while others use a project-based approach. Projects can allow an area to provide services to correctional facilities that are not limited to panels or meetings. Providing literature or meeting with correctional professionals may be the desired goal of an ASC or one of its committees. If there is not an area service committee, then service in correctional institutions needs to be the effort of one or more groups. The principle of accountability is important. Trusted servants should always be accountable to a committee or group. The point is for the area to structure services in a way that works toward meeting the area's goals.

The committee can encourage rotation of trusted servants while maintaining a consistent relationship with the correctional facility. The area can strive for a balance between applying the principle of rotation and the principle of continuity. This may mean that some commitments last six months to one year, while others may last longer. The area works to ensure that services are coordinated so that meetings in correctional institutions run smoothly.

Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to step aside and allow others to take over. An entrenched bureaucracy inhibits our fellowship's growth, while a regular influx of new leadership, balanced by continuity, inspires NA growth. The effective leader knows that, in order to maintain the distinction in service between principles and personalities, it is important to observe the practice of rotation.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Putting your plan into action

Interacting with facility staff

NA members will need to interact with the personnel at correctional facilities to establish a meeting, panel, or ongoing relationship with that facility. Those interactions are crucial to long-lasting relationships with local correctional facilities. It is often the manner in which we interact that is most important to our public relations. Our attitudes, our language, and our willingness to work cooperatively with organizations to reach more addicts are the foundation of our PR efforts. The following points can help members make those interactions more successful:

- 📄 Create a realistic picture of what NA can and cannot do.
- 📄 Make commitments that the area service committee can reasonably expect to fulfill.
- 📄 Maintain a dialogue with the facility. Make regularly scheduled check-ins so those who work at the facility are aware of NA's status. Be sure to update trusted servants' contact information with the facility and explain that, because we rotate positions, there may be different people coming into the facility.
- 📄 Ask to be introduced to the facility's staff and to be made aware of the facility's policies and procedures in writing, such as whom to notify in case of an emergency, whether personal identification is needed to enter the facility, when to sign in, etc. Be sure to share the information with those entering the facility.
- 📄 Discuss proposed meeting formats, and clarify whether correctional officers will be in attendance at the meeting.
- 📄 Inquire with facility staff about whether refreshments (such as coffee, tea, and snacks) are welcome at institutional meetings.
- 📄 Regularly ask the staff if NA seems to be meeting the needs of the inmates.
- 📄 Make the facility aware of free periodicals such as *Reaching Out* and *The NA Way Magazine* (provided through NA World Services) and NA literature available for purchase.
- 📄 If there are any problems with a panel in a facility, we can schedule a meeting with correctional staff to find solutions. A strong relationship with the staff helps us to better reach our goals of carrying NA's message, especially when problems arise.
- 📄 For more practical suggestions, see the "Do's and Don'ts" at the end of this chapter.

Juvenile-detention facilities and youthful offenders

Much of the prior information about correctional institutions, jails, and prisons applies to juvenile-detention facilities (including reform schools) and youthful offenders. Trusted servants entering juvenile-detention centers may want to review the training points listed in the previous section first. What follows is additional information that is especially important when interacting with this population.

Facility rules and local laws

It is important to be very clear about the rules and regulations of the facility and local laws. Minors are often under more restrictive legal protection. This may mean avoiding any sort of physical contact, including hugs. The best rule is to have no physical contact; this is

also true for most adult correctional facilities. The practice of women going into female institutions and men going into male institutions takes on even greater significance with youthful offenders. Due to the greater legal liability, and because of the age group of these offenders, staff is usually present during NA meetings. Members are usually required to defer to the facility's staff if there is distracting or inappropriate behavior in meetings.





Cooperating with parents and guardians

Working with youthful offenders may include interacting with parents or guardians. Members, in the spirit of cooperation, can inform parents and guardians about resources for family members of addicts. Nar-Anon is one of those resources, but there are also information lines, community services, and Families Anonymous, to name only a few. Cooperating with parents and guardians does not include delivering messages or gifts to incarcerated minors. The facility and area guidelines can outline the appropriate level of cooperation with parents and guardians.

Training and preparing trusted servants

Trusted servants who bring meetings into facilities where youthful offenders are housed may find that speaker-meeting formats work best. This is because facility staff is often present in meetings. It is best to create meeting formats that encourage clients to be careful about what they disclose and that help to keep the sharing focused on recovery in NA. Question-and-answer formats about the Twelve Steps, sponsorship, and the NA program can also be used as meeting formats in juvenile-detention centers. Trusted servants also need to be aware of possible behavior issues, such as distracting meetings with talking or comments, when youthful offenders who aren't necessarily addicts are forced to attend meetings.

The following considerations seem to especially apply when training trusted servants to enter a juvenile-detention facility:

-  Explain to juvenile offenders what to expect from the NA program and fellowship (NA members vary in age and ways they interpret the steps, etc.).
-  Avoid debates on addiction and facility practices.
-  Remember not to treat young people differently. Be careful not to demean these potential members or give them special privileges because of their youth.
-  To minimize distractions, set firm meeting guidelines. Meeting formats can explain that, in NA meetings, only one person speaks at a time and that we try to keep sharing focused on our personal experiences in recovery.

Discussing and addressing known challenges with juvenile corrections

Legal responsibilities

There may be legal liabilities if a minor shares in an NA meeting about being abused. The area can investigate local laws and take preventative measures. Meeting formats can be structured in a way that discourages sharing about abuse. Trusted servants can also educate facility staff about the limits of sharing in meetings. If a minor happens to share about being abused, the ASC or its committee needs to have a plan for how to deal with that kind of disclosure. Usually, abuse must be reported. A committee needs to be prepared to take responsible action in these situations.

Medication

Regardless of the personal opinions of its individual trusted servants, NA has no opinion about treatment methods such as the prescribing of medication. This can be a confusing area for trusted servants and for those attending NA meetings in an institution. Members often talk about our literature's message of complete abstinence from all drugs—but we have no opinion, as a fellowship, on medication. Our literature also says that we are not doctors and that we approach addiction in a spirit of nonprofessionalism. Our purpose is always the same: to carry NA's message to suffering addicts. Our message is best carried when we avoid engaging in controversies about topics like the use of medication. Members may want to refer to *In Times of Illness*, the essay on the Third Tradition in *It Works: How and Why*, and the *H&I Handbook* regarding this issue.

It is crucial that we do not advise anyone to stop taking their medication as prescribed. We are not doctors! Our approach is nonprofessional, and we have no opinion on outside issues. We must be very sure it is understood that we do not advocate going against a physician's advice—nor, on the other hand, can we endorse the use of any drug.






H&I Members' Experience

Correctional psychiatric units

We never know where there may be addicts who might benefit from hearing NA's message. Psychiatric facilities may house addicts with co-occurring mental health disorders or addicts who have used insanity as their defense and are in the institution under assessment. It doesn't matter to us why an addict is in a particular facility or what their other problems may be; what we care about is making NA's message available.

Training and preparing trusted servants

Panel presentations are often best suited for this population. These panels can be difficult, and trusted servants might get easily discouraged. The following points can help members be better prepared for entering these facilities:

-  These panels are more successful when trusted servants are experienced in recovery and in carrying the NA message in correction institutions. Understanding the challenges of those housed in psychiatric units can also help members in these settings.
-  Do not give anything to the clients or inmates; know the facility's rules.
-  The rotation of trusted servants should be minimal because consistency is the priority in these settings. NA representatives need to have a clear sense of what they are doing, and the consistency may be comforting to the clients.
-  Disruptive behaviors in meetings may be the norm. Experienced trusted servants can often ignore these disruptions. The committee can work with the facility's staff to find ways to minimize the impact of disruptive behaviors in meetings.
-  This population is often systematically medicated to control their behavior. Experienced members may be better able to handle questions that sometimes arise about the use of medication. Be sure to offer no opinion on medications. (For more information about the issue of medication when serving on panels, see the information above in the Juvenile-Detention Facility and Youthful Offender section.)

- ✎ Be sure to demonstrate that NA is not a part of the facility and that the members of NA are not a part of the facility's staff.
- ✎ Utilize a strict meeting format; formats should be exclusively about presentation. Recovery tapes can also be helpful when carrying the NA message into these facilities.
- ✎ The attention span of clients and inmates in this setting can be short; meetings can be shortened to accommodate this.

Carrying the message in these facilities is an especially sensitive type of service. Only the most experienced H&I members should be selected to participate. These facilities usually have extensive requirements regarding participation from the outside. Extra care must be taken to fully acquaint ourselves with the facility's policies and restrictions. You may wish to provide H&I members with the maximum amount of protection the facility staff can provide when working in these types of facilities.

H&I Members' Experience

Drug courts

What are drug courts?

Many people convicted of nonviolent drug-related crimes are sent to Narcotics Anonymous as a result of court diversion programs. Drug-court professionals added twelve-step programs as a part of this alternative treatment because they are effective and there is no cost. Twelve-step programs were a part of studies that resulted in NA being seen as a viable option for addicts. As a result of those studies, referrals to NA meetings from drug courts have increased significantly in recent years. Drug court programs (or similar programs) are being established around the world. The specifics of these programs may vary in different communities, but the premise is similar.

Drug courts (or court diversion programs) have made a significant impact on Narcotics Anonymous—so much of an impact that the World Board created Bulletin #31, "Meeting Attendance Cards." Addicts often hear NA's message of recovery as a result of the criminal-justice system. This does not mean that NA's relationship with drug courts is free of challenges. Groups and ASCs that take a proactive approach to their relationships with drug courts seem to be more successful in dealing with the impact of drug courts on the local NA community. This section focuses on ways in which groups and ASCs can build relationships with drug courts as part of their efforts to carry NA's message of recovery.

NA's relationship with drug courts

Being proactive means letting court officials know what the NA program is (and isn't) and what NA can (and cannot) do. We want to create cooperative relationships with drug courts while honoring our traditions. Having area discussions helps members become aware of the potential impact drug courts can have on local NA meetings. These discussions give members an opportunity to offer input and find solutions for how to handle attendance cards, accommodate numerous newcomers attending local NA meetings, and build relationships with drug-court personnel.

Area discussions about drug courts

Following are some points the ASC can consider when discussing ways to be more proactive with drug courts:

- 📄 Invite drug-court personnel to participate in a roundtable discussion with members of the ASC. These discussions can focus on ways to better help court-ordered attendees. Court officials can be educated about NA meetings and the NA program, and trusted servants get an opportunity to learn about drug courts.
- 📄 Drug-court personnel (including prosecutors, probation officers, parole officers, police officers) need to know that NA is a viable resource for addicts (since they often have initial interactions with addicts in the community). The area could place posters in police stations, probation offices, or parole office waiting rooms.
- 📄 Discuss which meetings might be best suited to handle a large influx of court-card attendees.
- 📄 Create newcomer workshops to help newcomers understand the NA program, especially at the courthouse, parole center, or other similar settings. Newcomer workshops can be helpful in smaller areas that may have NA meetings with fewer members. Newcomer workshops are similar to panel presentations in that trusted servants provide information about NA in a structured format. A committee can use the *Institutional Group Guide* to start meetings at drug courts that may later become self-contained and self-supported.
- 📄 NA members can discuss the role a judge may play in referring addicts to NA. A judge may monitor a client's recovery and be actively involved—this may mean that a judge requires a client to have a sponsor, do step work, and get a group commitment. If a judge attempts to require a sponsor to come to court, however, the boundary of cooperation has been crossed, because the sponsor is not under the court's jurisdiction. We can refrain from requests that conflict with either our traditions or our civil rights. Judges and institutions are not responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with our traditions—that responsibility falls on us.
- 📄 ASCs can sometimes participate in government training programs for drug-court officials. By participating in such training, giving presentations, or organizing an exhibit, a large number of new officials are given a clearer understanding of NA's role, challenges, and abilities.

What an area can communicate to drug-court officials

The ASC can communicate the following points to drug-court officials during initial interactions:

- 📄 Clarify that NA is a voluntary recovery program, not a treatment center.
- 📄 Describe what occurs during an NA meeting: We pass out keytags to recognize clean time, we practice sponsorship, there are various meeting formats, etc.
- 📄 Discuss the principle of the Seventh Tradition with court officials so they educate their clients about what this principle means in NA. This may mean that court-referred addicts help put away chairs or contribute money in the Seventh Tradition basket.
- 📄 Communicate with the appropriate court staff (often the court coordinator). These professionals usually decide how many meetings the court-ordered attendees need to attend, and judges usually monitor this decision. Communicate information about which meetings can best accommodate a large influx of attendees.
- 📄 Provide up-to-date meeting schedules and helpline numbers.

- 📄 Suggest that courts purchase NA pamphlets and other NA literature to give to their clients.
- 📄 Invite drug-court personnel to attend open NA meetings.

Desire is not a measurable commodity. It lives in the heart of each individual member. Because we can't judge the sole requirement for membership, we are encouraged to open wide the doors of our meetings to any addict who wishes to join. We are asked to extend to others the care and concern that helped each of us find a sense of belonging. The Third Tradition helps NA grow by encouraging us to welcome others.

It Works: How and Why

Meeting attendance cards and NA groups

There are several reasons why members seem to get uncomfortable about court-ordered attendees at NA meetings. One reason is that Narcotics Anonymous, as a fellowship, does not participate in the surveillance of its members; another is that the idea of forced attendance seems to go against some of our core philosophies. Many members, however, have found NA through parole and other forced-attendance programs, including treatment facilities. It is not up to us to decide if someone is ready to get clean or if they are a member of NA. Many addicts who did not initially want to attend NA meetings ended up staying in NA as a result of forced attendance.

There is also the very practical reality that drug-court referrals can affect a group's atmosphere of recovery and can drain a group's financial resources. It may be helpful to remember that our literature says that we don't care where an addict comes from. Groups can ask themselves if eliminating the attendance of those referred by drug courts is really the best solution. The following ideas can help groups discuss solutions to the real challenges they face with drug-court referrals:

- 📄 The group may want to take an inventory. This inventory could focus on how ready and able the group is for drug-court referrals. Although increased attendance can overwhelm the atmosphere of recovery, a group may want to consider its attitude toward those who are court referred. Is the group open and welcoming? Some court-mandated clients may not be addicts or may not be ready to admit that they are addicts. The group can ask themselves if they are practicing NA's Third Tradition.
- 📄 A group can look to see if the format of the meeting is suitable for a large influx of new members. A group that has a participation format may decide to structure the meeting format in a way that better serves newcomers, such as a newcomer workshop, speaker meeting, or question-and-answer format. Even after all these considerations, a group may decide that the meeting cannot accommodate those with meeting-attendance cards. The group would then communicate this to the ASC or the committee in contact with court personnel. NA groups that decide not to sign court-attendance cards can be listed in the area meeting directory so they aren't mistakenly attended by court-referred clients.

Tradition Three: *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.* All addicted persons are welcome and equal in obtaining the relief they seek from addiction; every addict can recover in this program on an equal basis.

- 📄 The signing of cards is providing a service to addicts. The NA group is not participating in surveillance. In NA's early history, every meeting was under surveillance. Asking the police to stop surveilling meetings so that addicts would not be afraid to attend them was one of our fellowship's first cooperative PR actions; if we find that meetings are under surveillance again, we can take similar actions. In signing court-attendance cards, groups are verifying attendance as a service for addicts, not for the courts. The confidentiality of the addict will be respected; we strive to treat court-referred members in the same way that we treat other NA members.
- 📄 In some instances, members may be concerned that addicts with court cards are leaving meetings early. Fortunately, it is not our responsibility to monitor whether or not a court-referred member stays for the entire meeting. To discourage these members from leaving early, however, some groups collect cards when the Seventh Tradition collection is passed and return them at the end of the meeting. If the group is uncomfortable with signing cards, then they may want to consider alternatives like a group stamp.

The strength of our relationship with the criminal-justice system has the potential to make a difference in the lives of many addicts. Strong relationships are built on clear communication, reliability, trustworthiness, and ongoing dialogue. We practice our primary purpose of carrying NA's message to suffering addicts in our service efforts with the criminal-justice system.

Resources

- Criminal justice encouragement letter
- Criminal justice letter to professionals
- Frequently asked questions – Criminal justice professionals
- Criminal justice tracking form
- Newcomer workshops

Organizational contact suggestions

- Drug courts
- Correctional facilities and jails
- Forensic units
- Police/sheriff
- Education/training (law schools, drug-court training, criminal-justice education programs, police academies, etc.)
- Professional associations (specifically national and international)
- Probation/parole officers

Addendum

“Do’s and Don’ts” (adapted from *Hospitals & Institutions Handbook*):

Do’s

- 👍 Make NA helpline numbers available to inmates so they can find NA upon release.
- 👍 Clarify the rules with whomever you bring into the facility.
- 👍 Start and end on time!
- 👍 Emphasize that NA recovery is available to all addicts, regardless of drug(s) used.
- 👍 Clearly state that Narcotics Anonymous is separate from the facility and from other fellowships and treatment methods.
- 👍 Screen all panel members, speakers, and chairperson(s).
- 👍 Attempt to get all agreements with correctional staff in writing.
- 👍 Cover any gang-related tattoos.

Don’ts

- 👎 Dress inappropriately (find out the facility’s dress requirements).
- 👎 Attend H&I meetings in facilities alone.
- 👎 Emphasize using drugs while sharing an NA message of recovery.
- 👎 Debate any issues involving facility rules, regulations, programs, or other fellowships.
- 👎 Discuss conditions within the facility or facility staff members with inmate(s).
- 👎 Wear flashy jewelry or carry excessive cash.
- 👎 Take messages or carry letters in or out of the facility.
- 👎 Bring an NA member who has friends and/or family in the facility.
- 👎 Ask what type of crime an inmate has been convicted of, or discuss guilt or innocence.
- 👎 Accept money or gifts from, or give money or gifts to, any inmate.

TREATMENT: INPATIENT, OUTPATIENT, AND RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS

The Narcotics Anonymous World Services *Membership Survey* suggests that over 40 percent of our members found NA meetings through the encouragement of addiction-treatment providers. Creating relationships with addiction-treatment professionals can be an important way to ensure that NA's message is available to addicts. When interacting with treatment facilities and professional-treatment associations, we strive to achieve the following goals:

- ❖ Increase the **visibility, reliability, and accessibility** of Narcotics Anonymous.
- ❖ Raise awareness that NA is a **resource** in the community.
- ❖ Demonstrate that NA is a **viable, self-sustaining organization** with no membership dues.

Regardless of the treatment setting, this chapter covers ways to build relationships that are more likely to help us achieve the goals stated above. Information about preparing a committee, training trusted servants, and developing approaches for how to interact in various treatment settings is contained in this chapter.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & addiction treatment

**Planning & preparation for
areas & committees**

**Discussing & addressing
known challenges in
treatment settings**

Putting your plan into action

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips





PR principles for discussion

Attraction



What is likely to be attractive to the public and to professionals who interact with addicts is reliable communication, responsibility, commitment, and behavior that reflects recovery. We can demonstrate the reliability of NA by showing up and fulfilling the obligations we make, whether it is to return a telephone call for information about NA or supplying meeting directories at a public library. We can learn to draw on the experiences of NA members to fulfill the commitments we make to professionals. In the event that something prevents us from our keeping an appointment, we can ask a fellow member to fulfill our commitment for us and notify the person with whom we have the commitment to let them know someone else will be coming in our

place. We can also maintain good communication within our committee by staying in contact with the committee chairperson. We need other NA members to be truly successful in building and maintaining relationships with the public. Cooperation and collaboration in our areas and committees can help us provide an attractive message of recovery to the public.

-  How does our individual behavior impact the attractiveness of the NA program?
-  What can members do to make NA more attractive to the public?

Cooperation, not affiliation

We are more likely to form productive and cooperative relationships when we simply and honestly review what services we can and cannot offer to others. For example, if we are forming a relationship with a treatment or correctional facility, we ask about their expectations of NA. Maybe they have requested weekly meetings and, after an honest assessment, we decide that we cannot meet their request. Instead, we can offer a meeting on a monthly basis. In this manner, we create a relationship that we can responsibly sustain over time. We practice cooperation by being honest about what we are able to provide, and we still find a way to respond to requests. As a result, public organizations learn to trust our members and rely on our program as a credible community resource.




-  How can we work with the public and other organizations without merging or affiliating with them?
-  What is our experience (as members and as an area) with cooperating with the public?

Public relations and addiction treatment

As a result of an area planning process (see the resource to Chapter Three for the Area Planning Tool), trusted servants may have decided that building stronger relationships with local treatment facilities is a priority. The area service committee can then discuss what it is capable of providing, what the local treatment facility may have requested from NA, and what it believes is necessary to make NA's message available in local treatment settings.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

In addition to the area's planning process, the following questions can be helpful when trusted servants are evaluating and deciding what kinds of services they can provide in treatment settings. These questions can help an area have broad discussions about ways to create strong relationships with treatment staff.

-  Are we interacting with treatment professionals in a spirit of **cooperation**? Are we approaching treatment facilities with an attitude that the NA program and a treatment program share the common goal of helping addicts stay clean, although our methods may vary?
-  Are we providing the treatment facility with **relevant information** about NA? Have we provided the treatment facility with a reliable NA contact? Have we given the facility the NA product catalog and/or an initial supply of NA literature? Are we regularly mailing up-to-date NA meeting schedules to treatment facilities?
-  How can the area (or committee) work with treatment professionals to ensure that clients are able to easily **access** NA; for example, have we made treatment professionals aware of NA meetings in the community?

- ✎ Often, treatment professionals ask for information about NA meetings that may appeal to a **specific population**. Have we identified local meetings that may be helpful to specific populations (for example, the hearing impaired, youth, gay men and lesbians, various language groups, etc.)?
- ✎ Given the area's **human resources** (members), how many meetings can the area reasonably bring into local treatment facilities, and continue to bring over time? What would be the best use of NA's human resources, and what would meet the needs of the community? Will trusted servants bring in meetings on a weekly basis? A monthly basis?

As addiction treatment changes, so will the way in which we provide services in those settings. We can keep in mind that there are many ways in which to build positive relationships with treatment professionals. Outpatient treatment settings and faith-based treatment approaches may require services other than just providing NA meetings. We can build relationships in these settings by providing information about the NA program, scheduling regular meetings with staff, and developing a solid relationship founded on cooperation and respect.

It may be that the most valuable service we can provide in treatment settings is a cooperative relationship. This means that we can offer accurate information so that these treatment professionals understand the NA program and are willing to refer their clients to NA meetings. Cooperative relationships also mean that our interactions are consistent and reliable. Creating a schedule to drop off updated meeting directories each month, or phoning various facilities with an updated NA phonenumber, can be integral in forming solid relationships.

Coordinating services

There are a variety of ways in which to coordinate services in treatment settings. Some committees use the panel-leader format to bring meetings into treatment centers, while others use a project-based approach to reach an identified goal (such as providing literature or regularly meeting with treatment professionals). If there is not an area service committee, then service in treatment facilities needs to be the effort of one or more NA groups. The principle of accountability is important. Trusted servants should always be accountable to a committee or an NA group. The point is for the area to structure services in a way that works toward meeting the area's goals.

If a relationship with another organization compromises our devotion to carrying the recovery message, we need not be afraid to let go of that relationship. Our strength is in the power of the NA program.

It Works: How and Why

Public relations in treatment settings is based on our ability to build positive relationships, provide relevant and consistent information, and make NA more accessible. Planning, training, and communicating can help us to make the NA program more available to any addict seeking recovery from addiction.

Committee preparation

Preparing for interactions in treatment settings is more likely to foster positive, long-lasting relationships. Trusted servants often respond to requests from treatment centers without considering the area's abilities and the greatest needs of the community.

Considering the best use of NA resources can help committees become more proactive in establishing and maintaining relationships in treatment settings. The following list can help an ASC or a committee that is planning to enter or that has already established a relationship with treatment facilities:

- 📄 The committee has trusted servants who are willing to be of service over a period of time.
- 📄 The committee is prepared to maintain ongoing dialogue with facility staff. This includes providing ongoing information, following up with information requested by staff, and asking for feedback such as how meetings are going, if trusted servants are following through on their commitments, and if the treatment center has updated meeting directories and a sufficient amount of literature.
- 📄 The committee considers providing services for outpatient treatment settings. Outpatient treatment is an often-overlooked treatment setting. The committee can provide meeting schedules, NA pamphlets, and local NA contact information. An outpatient setting can also be a good place in which to hold a regularly scheduled NA meeting that is listed in the local meeting directory, versus a meeting that trusted servants bring into the facility.
- 📄 The committee can make an effort to include presenters who are likely to create a sense of identification. This may mean including a younger panel member for a presentation to young people.
- 📄 Trusted servants who provide phonline service and maintain meeting schedules need to communicate with each other regularly. This can help ensure that information about NA is consistent and accurate.
- 📄 The committee has created meeting formats that are appropriate for treatment settings. Clients often benefit from shorter, more structured meeting formats. The committee can discuss the proposed meeting format with treatment staff to get their input and ideas.
- 📄 The committee can encourage rotation of trusted servants while maintaining a consistent relationship with the treatment facility. The area can strive for a balance between applying the principle of rotation and the principle of continuity. This may mean that some commitments last six months to one year, while others may last longer. The ASC works to ensure that services are coordinated so that meetings in treatment settings run smoothly.

We look for ways to help instead of judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it. Any addict who walks into a meeting, even a using addict, displays a level of willingness that cannot be discounted. While maintaining an emphasis on the importance of total abstinence, still-using addicts are welcomed into our meetings with special encouragement to keep coming back.

It Works: How and Why

Discussing and addressing known challenges in treatment settings

The following topics can be discussed within the committee and at the area service committee prior to interacting with treatment professionals.

Drug replacement

Areas and groups often enter into discussions about drug-replacement therapies and the Narcotics Anonymous program. NA's Third and Tenth Traditions are essential to these discussions. We need to remember that we cannot assess anyone's desire to get clean and that NA has no opinion on drug-replacement therapies. However, the experience of NA members is that being clean means complete abstinence from all mood- and mind-altering drugs, including those used in drug-replacement therapies. As our Basic Text states, "Complete abstinence is the foundation for our new life."

Raising awareness about our Third Tradition—that the only requirement for membership in NA is a desire to stop using drugs—can benefit discussions about drug replacement. Anyone is welcome at NA meetings, even if they seem as though they don't know if they want to stop using drugs. A group must always maintain its primary purpose of carrying NA's message of recovery to addicts.

**"...the only requirement
for membership in NA
is a desire to stop
using drugs..."**

Although NA is a program of complete abstinence, nowhere does NA say a person has to be clean to attend NA meetings; we need to be aware of this when interacting with drug-replacement clients. Sometimes

meeting formats ask those who have used drugs not to speak—but it is not our job to judge or evaluate if someone is clean or not. Our Third Tradition cautions us from judging another member's desire and encourages us to welcome any addict who comes into an NA meeting.

In our public relations service, we may choose to limit the participation of members on drug-replacement medication. We do this because we do not want the NA program to be misrepresented; we are a program of complete abstinence. Yet, we want to be inclusive, so we treat these situations sensitively by taking members aside and sharing our own experience with living drug-free. We can share that some members have tapered their drug use to abstinence through replacement methods (World Services Bulletin #29 can be a useful resource). We can also share that drug replacement may seem to help today, but our experience with recovery in NA means that we are able to live free from all drugs without the need to substitute one drug for another.

Use of NA's name

The area service committee can clearly outline the way a treatment center can use the NA name. The misuse of NA's name is a public relations concern because outside organizations can potentially affect the public's perception of NA. A treatment center can say that NA meetings are held at their facility, but they cannot say that this implies NA's endorsement of their facility, and they cannot pretend to have an affiliation with NA by saying that the presence of our meetings in their facility means that they are an "NA treatment center." If a treatment center has used NA's name inappropriately, then members can inform the treatment center, in a cooperative and constructive manner, that their use of NA's name in that way is not permitted. Trusted servants may decide to inform treatment centers about NA's traditions regarding this issue. If the treatment center continues to use NA's name inappropriately, then the area can forward the issue to Narcotics Anonymous World Services.

Sponsorship and treatment

If a treatment center wants to place conditions on the role of a sponsor, then we can engage them in a dialogue. We can discuss the nature of sponsorship in NA using tools like the *Sponsorship* pamphlet; we can cooperatively give treatment professionals a realistic picture of sponsorship while honoring the autonomy of our members. Ultimately, it is each member's decision whether or not they want to sponsor in a treatment setting that may or may not require a sponsor to follow treatment center guidelines.

Group preparation

Treatment centers will often decide to send their clients to NA meetings in the community. Groups may want to prepare for this influx of new members. Members can make decisions about how to best welcome treatment clients through a group conscience. Some groups have a meeting greeter, while other groups hand out meeting schedules with members' phone numbers. Groups that are overwhelmed by a large influx of treatment-center clients can develop more structured meeting formats. A speaker meeting or question-and-answer format may be more appropriate for a meeting with a large number of newcomers. Group members can always focus on sharing about recovery in NA and the benefits of sponsorship to set a positive meeting tone.

The relationships we have with outside organizations are not based on the personalities of our leaders; our groups themselves are responsible for their cooperation with other organizations, making those contacts stronger and more effective.



It Works: How and Why

Training and preparing trusted servants

Training and preparing trusted servants is essential for successfully carrying NA's message into any treatment setting, whether it be outpatient, inpatient, spiritual, or vocational. The following points can be helpful when preparing to bring a panel or discussion meeting into treatment facilities:

- ✎ Trusted servants are oriented to the treatment setting and facility staff.
- ✎ The committee has guidelines for members who bring meetings into treatment facilities. These protocols include clarifying with staff meeting start time, day, format, how early to show up for meeting commitments, and procedures for canceling a scheduled NA meeting.
- ✎ Members are trained to share a clear message of recovery in NA.
- ✎ Clean-time requirements for trusted servants are established and followed; most areas have clean time requirements for those who speak in treatment facilities.
- ✎ Because the language and dress of trusted servants affect NA's public image, trusted servants are encouraged to speak and dress in a way that is respectful of the treatment facility.
- ✎ NA members offer no opinion on medications or treatment methods. NA is not in competition with treatment methods; we enter treatment settings with willingness to work together, to share an NA message of recovery, and to inform treatment providers about the NA program.
- ✎ During their training, NA members are made aware that many treatment clients are prescribed medication for illnesses like depression and anxiety. NA members are

encouraged to welcome these clients at NA meetings. To gain a better understanding of how NA's principles relate to these issues, members can read and discuss *In Times of Illness* or the essays about the Twelve Traditions in the Basic Text or *It Works: How and Why*.

-  Trusted servants are trained to provide regular reports to the committee about the status of meetings held in treatment facilities.
-  The committee can work with the facility to establish mutually agreed-upon protocols for how NA members should interact with treatment clients. Clients may ask for their phone numbers, if they can sponsor, or if they are willing to take clients to local meetings in the community. It is each member's choice whether to interact with treatment clients in this way, as long as the treatment center's policies do not prohibit it. A committee can also establish client-interaction guidelines that consider the facility's policies.

NA meetings in treatment settings

Some NA meetings in treatment centers are for clients only. These meetings are usually a result of an area committee's service efforts and don't usually collect a Seventh Tradition. These meetings typically use a panel format, where panel leaders bring speakers into the facility.

There are also meetings held in treatment centers that are open to clients and NA members from the area. These meetings function like any other NA meeting and are usually listed in the area meeting directory. NA literature is usually read in the beginning of the meeting, a speaker or chairperson facilitates the meeting, a discussion format is often used, the meeting closes with a prayer, etc.



Our relationships with outside agencies exist to help us fulfill our primary purpose, not merely build our reputation or prestige. When we observe the spirit of anonymity, we seek nothing other than to carry the recovery message to the addict who still suffers.

It Works: How and Why

Putting your plan into action

Interacting with addiction-treatment professionals

The following points may be helpful when planning how to interact with treatment staff or professionals. Preparing what to communicate and addressing known challenges can further an area's goals of building positive, long-lasting relationships that benefit NA, the treatment center, and potential members.

-  Communicate NA's philosophy about addiction and recovery, such as total abstinence, the twelve-step approach, focus on addiction rather than drug use, etc.
-  Clarify what NA is able to bring into the facility. Don't be afraid to say that we cannot provide the number of meetings requested by the treatment center. Trusted servants can evaluate if NA resources are being used in a particular treatment setting to meet the needs of addicts in the community. If we decide that we can't meet all of the facility's needs, then we work with staff to come up with alternatives. One alternative might be that individual NA members can pick up clients and take them to local NA meetings in the community.

- 📄 Clarify what NA does and doesn't do. For example, we don't provide professional counseling, but we do practice sponsorship.
- 📄 Be straightforward and honest about the likelihood of encountering members in meetings with prejudices toward clients on medication and drug-replacement therapies.
- 📄 In some communities, NA is started in treatment facilities. NA members need to be careful that NA is not seen as being affiliated with a treatment facility. NA meetings may be held in a facility, but an NA meeting is not a particular treatment center's meeting. A treatment center may also refer its clients to NA as a community resource; however, we need to clarify that while NA may be one resource for those leaving treatment, we are not a treatment center's official aftercare program.
- 📄 When working with treatment professionals, respect the anonymity of professionals and staff who may also be members of NA. Treatment centers are separate from NA; not all employees may be aware of their coworkers' involvement in NA.
- 📄 Members who are also treatment professionals may need to consider that their role as a treatment professional is separate from their role as an NA member. In the role of a treatment professional, an individual is usually following treatment protocols instead of acting as an NA member talking about their personal recovery in NA.
- 📄 Encourage treatment professionals—counselors, therapists, case managers, and those recovering in other fellowships—to attend open NA meetings to help them have a better understanding of NA. Treatment professionals may want to attend meetings other than those their clients attend; this is respectful of their clients' anonymity and may allow for a different understanding of NA based on members who are not their clients. Attending NA meetings may give professionals a greater sense of what NA has to offer their clients. As a result, these professionals may feel more comfortable referring clients to NA.
- 📄 Show treatment professionals examples of long-term NA recovery. Invite members with long-term recovery to presentations, and invite treatment staff to NA meetings attended by members with long-term recovery.

Interacting with addiction-treatment organizations

Interactions with professional organizations will benefit from a coordinated plan that allows for an ongoing, cooperative relationship. The following points can help area service committees prepare for interacting with professional organizations in the addiction-treatment profession:

- 📄 The area can develop a coordinated area plan for interacting with professional associations. A plan can help trusted servants understand their responsibility and the goals of the interaction. A coordinated plan ensures that trusted servants share the information they gain from their interactions with other trusted servants and members in the area. It also makes sure that the information an area provides to professional organizations is accurate; for example, helpline numbers and meeting schedules are up-to-date, and the area has reliable contact information.
- 📄 The area can develop criteria to prioritize what level of participation at these events (attendance, exhibit, or presentation) makes the most sense. One level of participation would simply be to attend, supplying meeting information, local helpline numbers, and

NA contact information at the event. The area may decide to participate in a more interactive fashion by presenting information about NA to treatment professionals (social workers, counselors, case workers, etc.).

- 📄 Another option is for the area to begin cooperative relationships with agencies that work with or assist treatment clients. For example, these relationships can be with clergy connected with the spiritual-treatment approach, government agencies responsible for child and family services, or colleges and universities that have addiction certification or degree programs.
- 📄 There are a variety of professional addiction treatment organizations around the world. Some of the more recognizable organizations are the International Council on Alcohol and Addictions, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, chemical-dependency nursing associations, etc. These professional organizations have conferences that are held in different cities all around the world. An area can find out if a conference is scheduled in their part of the world. Professional conferences can be a great way for an area to begin creating relationships with those who are involved with addiction treatment. Areas can work with the region or NA World Services for guidance and support in these efforts.

The area can also consider hosting a local public-relations roundtable. A roundtable is a structured meeting where the local NA community provides information about NA to professionals and then listens to feedback from specific questions asked about NA (see the area PR roundtable format at the end of the chapter). The aim of a roundtable is to create a cooperative relationship that benefits all those involved. We can ask professionals about their experience with NA; it may be that the experience is not all positive. Trusted servants can remember that this constructive criticism is likely to help us improve our ability to carry NA's message of recovery. Roundtables can also be a place where we dispel myths about addicts and NA, and they can help us improve the ways we provide services.

Whether an area service committee is just beginning to develop relationships in treatment settings or if ongoing relationships are being strengthened, public relations is enhanced by reliable and consistent communication, accurate information, and cooperative relationships.

Resources

- FAQs for specific treatment audiences
- Presentation kits
- Handouts for professionals

HEALTHCARE

Healthcare may be a new term and a new service opportunity for some NA members, but many members have found Narcotics Anonymous because of a recommendation made by a professional in the healthcare field. Healthcare settings such as public health clinics and physicians' offices are opportunities for us to further educate healthcare professionals about how NA can help addicts. Our public relations efforts in these settings will benefit from clearly identified goals as well as training and preparation tailored for each project.

This chapter contains specific suggestions for building relationships in various healthcare settings. This includes ideas for training and preparing trusted servants as well as suggestions for how to interact **with healthcare professionals, hospitals, and various healthcare organizations.**

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Cooperation, not affiliation

A big part of our credibility comes from the fact that we maintain our single focus of recovery from addiction. We can be seen as credible, and we can be present in an organization's decision making, but the only way we can be drawn into public controversy is if we offer an opinion on an issue outside the scope of our own program. If a facility wants us to endorse or lend our name to

its program, or an organization requests our support on a piece of legislation, we refrain. If we become involved in an outside organization's decision-making process, such as sitting on a board for a nonprofit agency as a representative of NA, we offer no opinion on the organization's business practices. We do not take sides on an outside issue, and we do not put NA at risk or compromise the clarity of our message. If we took one side or another on a legal issue or a medical practice, we would undermine our credibility and our primary purpose. We work to avoid being identified as taking any side or giving an opinion in a controversy. We stay focused only on how we can help those suffering from addiction. This focus allows us to build relationships where our role is clear and free of controversy.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & healthcare

Planning & preparation for areas & committees

Putting your plan into action

Discussing & addressing known challenges in healthcare settings

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion



How can NA benefit from forming cooperative relationships with healthcare professionals?

When does a cooperative relationship become affiliation?

Our experience has shown that we have many nonaddict friends who can advocate for NA. If a professional wants to support NA by sharing about the effectiveness of our program, they are free to do that. What we can do is try to ensure that the nonmember's enthusiasm for our program doesn't misrepresent the addict-to-addict nature of our program. NA is not a program where professionals treat addicts, although professionals often want to advocate for NA's viability because they have seen recovery working for their clients or loved ones. The role of the local service body in a situation like this is crucial. The NA community can provide training and establish accountability with the nonmember supporter; this way the nonmember supporter can become an asset to NA in fulfilling its primary purpose.

How can areas avoid affiliation (or the appearance of affiliation) when working with healthcare professionals?

What actions can an area take when working with nonaddicts friends of NA?

Communication

Communication is a two-way street. We strive to be effective, honest, open, consistent, and straightforward in our communications. We keep channels of communication open with those we are trying to reach in the public sphere. Communication is not just feedback. It is listening, accepting constructive criticism, and asking questions. Communication is verbal and non-verbal, written and oral, and it affects all of our public relationships. Good communication means listening to a member of the public after we have had an initial interaction. It is the quality of our correspondences and our awareness of various cultural environments.

How can we demonstrate integrity in our communications for healthcare audiences?

What does an area need to carefully consider in order to communicate more effectively?

Public relations and healthcare

Our public relations efforts in healthcare settings should strive to be focused and planned. Clearly defined goals can help to focus and clarify the actions that need to be taken to make a project successful. Healthcare professionals tend to respond to information that is easy to access and that highlights practical outcomes. Each audience may require different approaches and different types of information about NA. The following information can help area service committees create and maintain strong relationships with professionals in the healthcare field.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

Coordinating services

There are a variety of ways to coordinate NA services in healthcare settings. A committee may work together on specific healthcare projects, or it may select one or more trusted servants to carry out a specific project. Trusted servants should have the skills (such as communication) and necessary training to make projects successful. These trusted servants may be responsible for regularly providing literature in a medical walk-in facility, bringing an NA meeting to an inpatient detox unit, or working on forming a more interactive relationship with healthcare professionals. The principle of accountability is important.

Trusted servants should always be accountable to a committee. If there is not an area service committee, then service efforts need to be the effort of one or more NA groups. The area is free to structure services in a way that work toward meeting the area's goals.

For each responsibility assigned to the service structure, a single point of decision and accountability should be clearly defined.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Committee preparation

- 📄 The committee should prioritize and plan the order in which they will interact with healthcare professionals (see Chapter Three for details about how to plan and prioritize services). Trusted servants may choose to first work on a relationship with an emergency department; this could include providing information such as meeting schedules, informational pamphlets, and posters. The committee might then decide, based on their prioritized projects, to give presentations to hospital social workers or begin providing information about NA to pharmacists in the community.
- 📄 The committee defines the goal or purpose of each project. Defining the purpose of these relationships can help trusted servants have a clearer sense about the goals of their interactions. A committee's goal might be to simply introduce NA to those professionals who discharge patients in a hospital setting; another could be to form relationships with local physicians by giving a presentation and providing a regular supply of NA literature, such as informational pamphlets and meeting directories.
- 📄 The area can research various healthcare settings to find out who seems to be the best contact person in each setting, when to contact them, and the best way to reach them. This could be through either an email, a face-to-face meeting, or a telephone call. Many NA members are also healthcare providers and can provide valuable contact information.
- 📄 Clear, relevant, and concise information is likely to be more valuable in all PR settings, especially healthcare. Committees can create handouts and displays that are tailored to the specific audience. Healthcare professionals (such as nurses and physicians) often have limited time to spare. A single page of information about NA in the community, including reliable contact numbers other than the NA phonenumber, may work best in these situations.
- 📄 Be sure that trusted servants follow up on each interaction. Sending a letter or an email or making a phone call can be the beginning of an ongoing relationship with those who work in healthcare settings.
- 📄 The committee can consider matching trusted servants with each audience. Members need to be informed and trained. Members who are unable to separate their personal opinions about issues that are likely to come up in a healthcare setting, such as medication, may not be best suited to interact with certain healthcare audiences on behalf of NA.

Training and preparing trusted servants

- ✎ Trusted servants should have information about the healthcare settings they will be entering. Researching the profession or philosophies of an audience can help members anticipate questions and communicate more effectively. (See Chapter Four for details about research and presentations).
- ✎ Trusted servants should be trained to interact in the various healthcare settings that exist in their community. Training guidelines could include updating all healthcare audiences with current NA contact information, as well as ways to respond to a variety of requests made by healthcare professionals. Each healthcare setting is different; training can be tailored toward the specific circumstances, concerns, and needs of the various settings.
- ✎ Trusted servants should be trained to use clear and concise language. This means that presenters avoid using NA jargon or slang. A committee may invite an NA member who is also a healthcare professional or someone who understands the healthcare profession, to give a presentation. We are more likely to reach an audience when we are familiar with their practices and philosophies.
- ✎ The area may want to identify particular qualities of an ideal trusted servant for healthcare settings. The ability to communicate articulately, presentation skills, experience in NA, and the ability to demonstrate recovery are some examples of essential qualities for providing service in healthcare settings. Committees can also review the Fourth Concept when identifying the ideal qualities of a trusted servant.
- ✎ Practicing a presentation for a nonaddict audience familiar with healthcare practices can help trusted servants improve the effectiveness of the presentation.
- ✎ Many facilities require volunteers to attend an orientation session. Trusted servants should be prepared to attend one of these sessions if required by the facility. It is

“Researching the profession or philosophies of an audience can help members anticipate questions and communicate more effectively.”

becoming more and more common for facilities to require volunteers to attend these kinds of orientations.

- ✎ Healthcare professionals understand medical models. Trusted servants need to be trained to describe NA’s approach as an abstinence-based program of recovery. Members can educate professionals about our program’s philosophy of complete abstinence using NA literature (such as the *Am I an Addict?* IP) and relevant materials created by the committee. Members can explain to physicians that NA views addiction as an illness and that we see this illness as affecting addicts physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Trusted servants can also explain that NA is a comprehensive, peer-support recovery strategy that allows many members to lead more productive lives.
- ✎ When explaining why NA is not a drug-replacement program, trusted servants can rely on NA literature. (As an additional resource, see Chapter Seven’s discussion of drug replacement.)
- ✎ *NA: A Resource in Your Community* and the *NA Membership Survey* can be useful tools in healthcare settings. Trusted servants can order these materials by contacting NA World Services.

Putting your plan into action

Interacting with healthcare professionals

Healthcare professionals can include **physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, pharmacists, dentists,** and **nursing** professionals.

- 📄 The area service committee may consider hosting a public relations roundtable with healthcare professionals. These roundtables can be an opportunity for local areas to exchange information with healthcare professionals and can allow professionals to identify what they need from NA. Trusted servants can also use these roundtable discussions to dispel stereotypes about the NA program.
- 📄 Trusted servants can educate healthcare professionals about NA's successes. Providing statistics on the number of members around the world, the different countries where NA meetings are held, and the diversity of NA's membership (such as the economic, racial, and professional range in members) is likely to be particularly meaningful in healthcare settings. Professionals are often interested in outcomes. NA's membership survey can be used as support material.
- 📄 Trusted servants have an opportunity to share with medical professionals that NA is a program of complete abstinence and that our members often have special concerns about physicians prescribing potentially risky medications. At the same time, trusted servants can educate NA members that it is inappropriate to interfere with medication that has been prescribed to other members by healthcare providers. We can educate our members about the dangers of substituting one drug for another and we can educate the medical community about complete abstinence, but ultimately this is an issue between doctor and patient.
- 📄 Healthcare professionals such as physicians and dentists interact with a variety of people who use drugs. Following a presentation, trusted servants could suggest that physicians provide patients who they think may have a drug problem with the pamphlet *Am I an Addict?* Trusted servants could explain that the questions contained in that pamphlet are the questions members ask themselves when first coming to NA.
- 📄 Trusted servants can be trained to dispel myths about NA's name. Survey information outlining the range of drugs used by NA members can illustrate that NA is not just for those addicted to narcotics like heroin.

Discussing and addressing known challenges in healthcare settings

Harm reduction

Harm reduction is a treatment approach that may not promote abstinence yet claims to reduce harm to the individual and the community. NA is a resource that can be utilized within many treatment regimens and complements many professional treatment models. NA has no opinion on the effectiveness or validity of a specific model such as harm reduction. If requested, members can explain that NA is not in conflict or competition with approaches like harm reduction. Public health officials will often use statistical data to support various treatment models, including harm reduction. Trusted servants can explain that NA does not have statistical data that has been researched. Rather, NA uses self-reported information that is represented in the NA Membership Survey. Some areas and

regions have conducted research that shows members getting jobs, returning to school, and no longer committing crimes. This research is a valuable tool that can demonstrate the positive effect NA has in many communities.

Interacting in hospitals

Hospitals contain a variety of healthcare audiences. Some of these audiences include **medical detox units, emergency departments, psychiatric units, walk-in medical clinics** (such as urgent care), and **behavioral health** and **social service departments**.

- 📄 Hospitals can be a good opportunity to reach members of the community, including family members and friends of addicts. One level of interaction in this setting may be forming a relationship with emergency room staff so that trusted servants can place NA posters and meeting schedules where people from the community are likely to see them in times of urgent need.
- 📄 The format of meetings held in hospitals will vary depending on the unit. Clients in a behavioral health department, where there may be inpatient drug treatment units, may benefit from getting a sense of what a typical NA meeting is like through the use of a speaker meeting or a *Just for Today* meeting format. A meeting in a psychiatric unit, where clients usually have shorter attention spans, needs to be extremely structured to limit participation.

NA meetings in healthcare settings

In healthcare settings, there are two kinds of NA meetings: meetings that are for clients only and do not usually collect a Seventh Tradition, and meetings that are simply held at the healthcare facility and function like any other NA meeting. If a committee has decided to bring a meeting to a healthcare setting, such as an inpatient drug treatment unit, they need to

“If a committee has decided to bring a meeting to a healthcare setting, such as an inpatient drug treatment unit, they need to consider the needs of the audience.”

consider the needs of the audience. The meeting format can be modified so it is appropriate for those attending, such as patients who may have a shorter attention span. Hospital detoxification units and residential hospital programs will benefit from formats structured in different ways. A detox unit may benefit from a speaker meeting or an informational meeting, whereas a residential hospital treatment program may benefit from a structured participation format. Trusted servants should also keep in mind that staff may be in attendance at meetings. Trusted servants can communicate regularly with staff to clarify the day, time, and meeting format. The committee can discuss

benefits and drawbacks of open and closed meetings with staff before deciding what would be best for the patients. Trusted servants can offer a limited supply of NA literature and inform a hospital unit that additional NA literature is available for purchase.

Interacting with healthcare organizations

Healthcare organizations such as allied health (which includes medical assistants, nurses aides, and emergency technicians), Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), and professional medical associations (such as medical schools, associations for pharmacists, anesthesiologists, chemical dependency nurses, and social workers) are great opportunities for NA members to provide information about NA and build relationships.

- 📄 A committee may have prioritized an event or informational workshop for healthcare professionals. (See Chapter Four for details about giving presentations). Trusted servants should be sure to create formats and materials based on the specific audience.
- 📄 Many communities have local health fairs or healthcare provider forums. These events are excellent opportunities for area service committees to provide information to the community in a booth exhibit (see Chapter Four for details about exhibits and presentations). It also gives trusted servants a chance to network with healthcare providers who may come into regular contact with potential NA members.

Because healthcare professionals regularly interact with addicts, it is important for us to begin forming and maintaining cooperative relationships. Building relationships with healthcare professionals may be new for many of us. These relationships are another valuable way for us to carry NA's message of recovery to potential members.

Resources

- List of possible healthcare projects
- Handout targeted for healthcare audiences
- FAQs for a healthcare audience

PHONELINES

A call to an NA phoneline may be someone's first interaction with Narcotics Anonymous. These calls are vital; a phoneline call can make a major difference in whether or not an addict makes it to an NA meeting. We need to respond to callers in a way that makes them feel like they matter. We can encourage volunteers to bring all their experience and all their public relations awareness to this important service opportunity.

This chapter outlines ways an area can **evaluate its own resources**, choose a **phoneline provider**, **train and prepare phoneline volunteers**, and **coordinate services** in a way that makes local phonelines more successful.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Cooperation, not affiliation

One of our public relations goals is to build long-lasting relationships that further our primary purpose through the pursuit of those mutual goals we may share with other organizations. Compromising any of our traditions in an effort to build these relationships is never beneficial to individual members or NA as a whole. We maintain a consistent focus on our primary purpose with the public. By creating positive relationships with those outside of NA and with our own members, we foster unity and harmony with each other and the community around us. We put the common welfare of NA first, and we remember that we are only autonomous as long as our actions do not affect NA as a whole.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & phonelines

Planning & preparation for areas & committees

Discussing & addressing known challenges in phonelines service

Putting your plan into action

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion



How can our phonelines be used to cooperate with various outside organizations (such as the phoneline service provider, an organization we may use as a referral, other public organizations in the community, etc.)?



What cooperative actions can committees and groups take to ensure a smoothly running phoneline?

Attraction...

What is likely to be attractive to the public and to professionals who interact with addicts is reliable communication, responsibility, commitment, and behavior that reflects recovery. We can demonstrate the reliability of NA by showing up and fulfilling the obligations we make, whether it is to return a telephone call for information about NA or supplying meeting directories at a public library. We can learn to draw on the experiences of NA members to fulfill the commitments we make to professionals.

- 📖 Are phonline volunteers trained to carry an attractive message for Narcotics Anonymous?
- 📖 How can we make phonline service an attractive NA commitment?

Public relations and phonelines

The way an area prepares its phonline volunteers is connected (in part) to the type of phonline service provider used. In order to determine the best service provider, trusted servants may want to first look at the needs of the area, such as the size of the local NA community and the geographic area, and how they can prepare NA volunteers to meet the needs of callers. This section focuses on ways to assess the area's resources and how to train volunteers. Ideas for how to choose a phonline service provider are covered later in this chapter. Preparing and training phonline volunteers can help a local committee to make a more informed choice about various phonline options.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

Financial and human resources

Evaluating the area's financial resources is important in planning phonline service. The area needs to look at its budget to see what they can realistically afford. Trusted servants can evaluate the area's long-term financial ability before shopping for a phonline service provider. The area is more likely to maintain positive relationships with the public if the phonline service is consistent and reliable.

Evaluating the area's human resources can also help in deciding what kind of phonline service provider is the best for that area. An area that is financially healthy but lacks willing trusted servants may choose a phonline service provider with a professional answering service. An area with a larger pool of trusted servants may decide that a call-forwarding option will work best for them.

“More members may volunteer for phonline positions if the area considers the length of time slots and the flexibility of the system.”

An area can also think about ways to attract more trusted servants to take phonline positions. More members may volunteer for phonline positions if the area considers the length of time slots and the flexibility of the system. Maintaining volunteers for two- or three-hour slots may be easier than eight-hour time slots. The area can also choose a phonline service where trusted servants have the option of forwarding the NA phonline

to their cell phones. Using the area website to sign up for phonline slots can also encourage members to be of service. Flexibility and creativity can help the area find a larger pool of willing volunteers. The area can also remind members that a phonline








commitment can be done from the privacy of home. There are a variety of ways to attract phonline volunteers—a committee simply needs to discuss their options.

Most projects depend as much on ideas, information, conscience, and members' time and willingness as they do on money. If we have the funds needed to carry out a project but lack the time or ideas, we'd best wait until we've gathered all the needed resources before proceeding. If we don't, we will have wasted NA service funds.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Training and preparing trusted servants

When considering how to train and prepare phonline volunteers, we can look at who calls our phonelines: addicts (both potential members and current NA members), nonaddicts, family members and loved ones, and professionals. Our training and preparation can work to address the opportunities and challenges that arise with each of the above audiences. The following checklist can help an area develop training that empowers phonline volunteers to help addicts find NA and to provide information about NA:

-  Responsiveness is a key principle for phonline service. This means that trusted servants are trained to engage with callers in a sensitive, appropriate, and helpful manner.
-  Training for phonline service will include all those who represent NA on the phonline: trusted servants, special workers (if there is a regional or area office), and employees of an answering service (if one is used). The area can schedule continual and ongoing training.
-  The area can require that volunteers attend an initial hands-on training (see Chapter Four for details). This training can be supported by a written document of the area's expectations of phonline volunteers.
-  An ongoing training program might include providing NA literature (such as the *Who Is an Addict?* pamphlet), discussing NA principles, practicing mock phone calls, and presentations to new volunteers by more experienced members. Once trained, volunteers can be provided with basic materials such as a brief description of NA, updated meeting lists, and community referral phone numbers (see referral section).
-  Employees of an answering service will most likely benefit from a current meeting schedule and a short, one-page training handout that is regularly updated. (See addendum material for an example.)
-  The area may want to identify particular qualities of an ideal phonline volunteer. Leadership qualities such as integrity, the ability to listen, and sound judgment (see the Concept Four essay in *Twelve Concepts for NA Service* for more details) are essential in providing phonline service. Other qualities relevant to phonline service are an understanding of the importance of public relations, the ability to relate well to other people, and the abilities to communicate and to stay calm under pressure. These traits are important because phonline volunteers often have to perform in higher-pressure situations and because they are likely to be the first contact that people have with NA.
-  Volunteer guidelines that address issues such as avoiding or explaining NA jargon (such as “it works when you work it,” “home group,” “get a sponsor”), how to get volunteer time slots covered, and how to respond reliably to requests from the public will help support trusted servants in their commitment.

- ✎ Volunteers can be trained to use NA literature to present an accurate and positive message of recovery as well as to clarify that the NA program is separate from treatment centers or other twelve-step programs.
- ✎ Clean-time requirements should be established. Areas that lack human resources may need to be flexible with clean-time requirements. A strong training program will help phonline volunteers who may not have the desired clean time.
- ✎ Phonline volunteers need to be instructed to make no commitments on behalf of the area, region, or NA fellowship. If a professional or member of the public contacts an NA phonline, volunteers should be trained to provide as much information about NA as they can, solicit information from the public contact, and follow up with the appropriate trusted servant such as a committee chairperson or the area's media contact person.
- ✎ The committee needs to train phonline volunteers on how to handle difficult calls, such as calls from addicts who are under the influence of drugs, prank calls, and calls from those who suffer from mental illness. One strategy is to continually bring the conversation back to how the caller can get to an NA meeting and end a problem call before the situation escalates.

“...we also know that first impressions count and that the principle of attraction is important to an addict's ability to hear the NA message.”

- ✎ The committee can be prepared to quickly respond to a variety of phonline calls made by the public, including simple requests for information or calls made about problems created by the behavior of NA members.

- ✎ If phonline volunteers receive a call from a person in crisis, they should be very clear about where their responsibility ends. Phonline volunteers are not counselors or crisis workers. Threats to commit suicide, a drug overdose, or talk about

being a victim of violence are all examples of crisis calls. Refusing to refer such callers to qualified outside crisis agencies could have legal implications, depending on local laws. An area may want to research local laws to find out about individual legal responsibility. See the referral section below for more information about referring callers to outside organizations.

The purpose of our services is to help the fellowship fulfill its primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Honest, open, straightforward communication is essential to both the integrity and effectiveness of the NA service structure.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Discussing and addressing known challenges in phonelines service

Meeting recommendations

NA is frequently contacted by potential members and professionals looking for meetings they believe will allow for identification. Many volunteers have been faced with the question: Do you know a meeting that would help this person? We know that our traditions encourage a spirit of anonymity, and that anonymity allows us to meet equally as addicts. Yet,








we also know that first impressions count and that the principle of attraction is important to an addict's ability to hear the NA message. Trusted servants can respect callers' requests and recommend a meeting where they are likely to find addicts with whom they may identify. We do not, however, automatically assume that because someone is of a certain age, gender, ethnicity, or sexual identity, they will want a meeting recommendation.

Area service committees will probably want to discuss this issue and implement guidelines for how to recommend NA meetings to callers. Some areas have common needs meetings in which the group serves the needs of a specific population in that area, such as young people's meetings, women's and men's meetings, etc. These groups make it easier for an area to make meeting recommendations.

If there are no common needs meetings in an area but there are meetings where, for example, a larger population of young people regularly attends, then phonline volunteers can suggest these meetings to a caller asking for a recommendation. This may allow potential members to more easily identify and connect with NA. In making these recommendations, phonline volunteers can explain that many NA members feel a sense of unity within a very diverse fellowship.

Twelfth Step calls

A Twelfth Step call is usually a request for assistance to get to a meeting. We carry NA's message through Twelfth Step calls; this kind of service gives each member an opportunity to make the newcomer feel welcomed. The area can work to ensure that volunteers are willing and trained to do Twelfth Step calls. The most important concern is that NA members are safe. Before training volunteers to respond to Twelfth Step calls, the area should discuss and determine its policy on these calls. The following points can help areas consider how to create guidelines for responding to Twelfth Step calls:

-  A Twelfth Step call can mean that two or more addicts provide a ride to an NA meeting or that volunteers simply talk with the caller, helping the potential member get to a meeting on their own.
-  Trusted servants need to understand that any sexual interaction is inappropriate when performing Twelfth Step calls or when representing NA in any fashion on the phonline.
-  When possible, members meet those requesting a ride to a meeting in a public place.
-  In some areas, phonline volunteers do not perform Twelfth Step calls. Instead, there is a Twelfth Step call list containing the contact information of members who have volunteered to respond to Twelfth Step requests.
-  Due to the likelihood of being exposed to drugs and addicts who are under the influence of drugs, some areas require those who make Twelfth Step calls to have over five years clean.
-  The area will need to discuss what is appropriate for trusted servants performing Twelfth Step calls. An area may decide to create guidelines for the variety of requests often received during Twelfth Step calls (such as a ride to a meeting or to a detoxification center after attending an NA meeting).
-  The area may want to choose volunteers who have service experience and who have gained the ability to be productive members of society. This may reduce the likelihood of incurring legal problems. Those members under legal constraints (such as parole or probation) are usually not appropriate for making Twelfth Step calls. A guideline that requires trusted servants to have current auto insurance may be one way to prevent legal problems.

Referrals

Many phoneline calls are from nonaddicts or potential members looking for services other than what NA provides. There may be liability issues, which vary between states and countries, that make it important for us to offer emergency numbers at a minimum. We don't give referrals to one specific treatment center or detoxification unit. That would cross the boundary of cooperation into endorsement. Instead, we can provide a list of any and all local treatment centers and not align or affiliate ourselves with one in particular, or we can inform members of generic treatment referral numbers, such as the National Treatment Referral Line in the United States. If a caller has a phone directory, we can direct them to the services listed there. The same principle is true for suicide prevention

“Area service committees can work to form relationships with other community organizations, since we often share similar goals of helping addicts live without the use of drugs.”

numbers and other community service numbers. If an area decides to provide community referral numbers, they will want to verify if the phone numbers are valid. Area service committees can work to form relationships with other community organizations, since we often share similar goals of helping addicts live without the use of drugs.

Family members and loved ones of addicts frequently call our phonelines. The area can decide to provide numbers for Nar-Anon and Families Anonymous or other similar information. We don't recommend one program over another or offer our opinions about any of these programs; we simply provide contact information. Not providing this information

can be harmful to our public relations. We run the risk of prolonging or spoiling a chance for an addict to find NA. The area service committee may want to create a document for trusted servants that describes why NA does not endorse or affiliate itself with outside organizations (see sample at the end of the chapter); we provide contact information for other organizations in a spirit of cooperation.

Coordinating services

When thinking about how we coordinate phonelines, we can look at how best to structure and support these services. The area may decide to delegate the responsibility of the phoneline to a coordinator, who is accountable to the ASC. A phoneline coordinator could be responsible for gathering and training volunteers and planning guidelines for following up on any NA requests made through the phoneline.

Cooperation and collaboration with other committees, areas, and regions can also help in the coordinating of phoneline services. Areas often work collaboratively with the region or other areas for support. In an effort to strengthen services, some area committees—such as public information and phonelines—merge into one committee. A phoneline committee may also want to team up with the trusted servants (or the committee) who update meeting schedules to be sure that meeting information is accurate.

Areas can share their best phoneline practices with other areas. Committees from neighboring areas can share what is working—and what mistakes they've made—with their phonelines. A trusted servant who regularly checks the phoneline can report if the phoneline service is functioning properly. Malfunctions may have to do with the answering service, training methods, or a shortage of volunteers. Working cooperatively within the area and with the region (or neighboring areas) can help to strengthen the way the phoneline functions.

Multi-area phoneline service

Some areas have created a multiregional or multi-area phoneline service, sometimes called a cooperative phoneline service. Neighboring areas will combine their resources and share the responsibility of providing phoneline service. This usually eases the burden on one individual area's human and financial resources. Each area or region contributes financially to the phoneline so that financial accountability is shared. Meeting schedules can reflect all meetings in the multi-area.

There are some challenges with the multi-area model. One of the biggest challenges is establishing a single point of accountability. It is important to decide issues such as who will pay the phone bill and who will coordinate volunteers. Another challenge is that the involved NA communities may cross several area or city telephone codes. It is also a challenge to train volunteers to be able to identify meetings and services in neighboring areas. These multi-area models often recruit members in participating areas to train phoneline volunteers so that all are aware of the meetings and services in neighboring NA communities.

When we work to ensure the validity of NA, we're not working just for ourselves but for those yet to join us.








It Works: How and Why

Putting your plan into action

Phoneline service provider

Choosing a phoneline service provider depends on the needs of the area. (See Chapter Three, "Effective Services", for detailed information about assessing the needs of the area.) An area may be financially healthy but lack human resources; it may make more sense for that area to choose a phoneline system that may be more expensive but that can accommodate the lack of human resources. As always, an area will want to make a smart business decision when spending NA funds. One way to make an informed decision is to research the cost of various providers and evaluate if the various service providers accommodate the area's needs. An area can list the costs with the various advantages, disadvantages, and total monthly cost in order to get a picture of their choices.

Because of the ever-changing nature of technology, the following list is not exhaustive but contains some examples of the types of phoneline services an area may consider:

-  NA members answering calls
-  Call-forwarding service
-  Answering machine or voice mail
-  Answering machine or voice mail with pager
-  Answering machine or voice mail with live operator and/or pager
-  Professional answering service
-  Toll-free number

Each of the options listed above has various advantages and disadvantages, based on an area's human and financial resources. An area can decide which option is best, based on its needs and abilities. The following is an example of how an area can determine the pros and cons of various phonenumber options. This same process can be used for any type of phonenumber service being considered by the area.

NA members answering calls

Advantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent ability to communicate with addict 2. Accurate information 3. Trained members handle calls 	Disadvantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Requires major effort on part of ASC 2. Expensive 3. Reaching the majority within a geographic area in local calling adds expense 4. Requires significant fiscal responsibility and liability for area
-------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Total Monthly Cost: \$ _____

Answering machine or voice mail

Advantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accurate information 2. Least expensive 3. Requires minimal effort on part of ASC 	Disadvantages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No ability to communicate directly with addict 2. Requires fixed location 3. Requires fiscal responsibility and liability for area 4. An answering machine or answering service is usually checked every two or three days. The area needs to be sure to indicate that in the recorded announcement.
-------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Total Monthly Cost: \$ _____

📄 When listing the phonenumber number in a local phone directory, be sure to use a geographical marker instead of the area's name; for example, instead of listing a phonenumber as "The Biggest Heart of NA Area," use the city or town name. We want those outside of NA to be able to locate the phonenumber number in their community. The names of our areas don't always communicate to those outside of the program the geographical location of meetings.

📄 TDD (hearing-impaired capability) may also be a consideration when choosing a phonenumber service provider. As technology changes, so will our phonenumber options. What's important is for the area to base its choice on a realistic assessment of its own abilities and needs.

📄 Areas may decide to list the NA phone number in the community resource or crisis section of a telephone directory. Listing the NA phonenumber in this section may require the area to undergo a more extensive process, but can add credibility to NA as a community resource.

Our ability to effectively carry the NA message greatly depends on strong local phoneline services. A strong local phoneline helps us help addicts. Our phonelines are an opportunity to form cooperative relationships that may benefit potential NA members. Our NA phoneline is a service that we provide on other people's terms. We have heard members share about how their first call to an NA phoneline either helped them find NA or made it more difficult. Our ability to respond to callers in a sensitive, caring, and helpful way can make a real difference in whether or not an addict gets clean and finds recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

Resources

Phoneline training session

Phoneline flowchart

FAQ: Phoneline volunteers experience with calls

Referral form

Community referral list

INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

This chapter addresses Internet technology as it relates to our public relations efforts. Since a website is often one of the first points of contact for members of the public and potential NA members, this topic deserves thoughtful attention and planning. Whatever impression members of the public get from a website is likely to have a lasting effect. The material here is designed to help areas use Internet technology in a more useful and informative way.

This chapter is deliberately nonspecific since the rapid development of Internet technology makes this material likely to become dated. As a result, specific technology or products are not contained here. What is here—some of the fellowship’s current best practices with how to effectively use Internet technology to further our primary purpose.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Anonymity on the Internet

The Internet can often give the illusion that it is not a public sphere. As a result, the issue of personal anonymity on the World Wide Web can be a confusing one. Many members, in enthusiastic efforts to carry NA’s message of recovery, have set up personal websites or weblogs. One way a personal site could respect the principle of anonymity would be to state that the site does not represent NA; it speaks only for the individual. Personal sites can also provide links to a local registered site or to na.org. Personal websites can further protect members’ anonymity by using words like “recovery” instead of specifically stating that they are members of Narcotics Anonymous. Using “recovery” instead of “Narcotics Anonymous” will help the site avoid being recognized by a search engine if someone is looking for an NA meeting or information about Narcotics Anonymous. It can also help members maintain their anonymity in this public medium.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & Internet technology




Planning & preparation for areas & committees



Discussing & addressing known challenges with Internet technology

Putting your plan into action

Resources

Key icons

-  Practical experience
-  Preparation and training tips
-  PR principles for discussion

-  How can members practice anonymity when using the Internet?
-  How can an area use Internet technology to help carry the NA message?

Public relations and Internet technology

The Internet has had an enormous impact on the growth of NA. It allows for more regular communication and provides a vehicle for making information and service resources more readily available. An area's ability to use Internet technology depends on the skills of members, their financial resources, and the information they have about how to effectively use websites and the Internet. Remember, it may not be necessary for every area to have a website; planning and prioritizing which services are most important in the area can help trusted servants decide if a website is, in fact, the best use of their resources. Areas may want to consider communicating with the local regional committee to be sure there isn't a duplication of services. If an area decides to create a local website, the following information can help trusted servants use Internet technology more effectively.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

The key to providing useful information on a website is to allow for clear, simple navigation to the relevant information. One way to achieve this, or to improve the effectiveness of an already existing site, is by clarifying the **purpose of the site**. For example, an area may determine that the most important functions of the website are to reach potential members and the public and to support area service. Clarifying the purpose helps identify the **audiences** the area is trying to reach. Identifying the audience and what the area is trying to communicate to that audience becomes the foundation for making decisions about the content that should be included on the site. Remember, a website will reach audiences beyond the local community. It is important to keep this in mind when identifying the site's potential audiences. Some examples of audiences an area may want to communicate with are:

- 📄 **The public** (including potential members and family and loved ones of addicts)
- 📄 **Professionals**
- 📄 **Existing members**

Another way to organize a website is to simply identify the audiences as **members** and **visitors**. Either way, knowing the audiences the site is trying to reach will allow the area to be clear about the content that would be most relevant for each audience. Some examples of the content that might be relevant for each identified audience are:

- 📄 **For the public** (including potential members and family and loved ones of addicts):

NA literature, meeting information, phonenumber, and possibly referral information.

- 📄 **For professionals:**

Information about NA, NA literature, meeting information, local surveys, and a contact person who is responsible for public interactions (such as a committee chairperson or a public relations committee member).

- 📄 **For existing members:**

Meeting information, service resources such as local guidelines, NA event information, information about how to be of service, and password-protected materials like committee minutes.

Once the purpose of the site has been established, it can be designed in a way that works toward achieving that purpose. This is where having experienced local people or sufficient financial resources can make a difference. Areas are encouraged to seek help from professionals in designing their websites—this may mean using services offered by a local

member who is also a web design professional or hiring a nonmember to design the site. The area can always use the purpose and the audience to make any decisions about how the site should be designed.

The following points can help an area in thinking about website design:

- ✎ Be sure to state the purpose of the site on the front page in a simple and clear way. The purpose of a local NA website may simply be to provide information to those interested in Narcotics Anonymous and to facilitate communication and support for local NA members. Remember, the website should capture the attention of the audience in a very short period of time.
- ✎ The front page of a site should also state what information can be found on the site and what information is not contained on the site. (For example, if the site only contains meeting information for the local area, be sure to indicate that the site does not contain meeting information for neighboring areas or regions, and provide a link to a regional site that does contain that information.) The area can also link to NA World Services to provide any information that is not contained on their local site.
- ✎ The area will want to avoid creating a website with great design but minimal content or one with poor design and too much content. The site should be designed in a way that allows for easy navigation to the relevant information.
- ✎ Remembering the site's audience can help the area design the site using the most universally accepted technology available. The area most likely wants to reach as many people as possible, and using common technology can ensure that.
- ✎ Free web hosting is not considered a best practice. A decision to forgo free web hosting helps to eliminate a number of problems, the most important being the possibility of an NA website having to provide advertising or links to inappropriate sites. Free web hosting also limits how much content can be contained on the site. Using free web hosting is often the reason why local NA sites end up with advertisements. Allowing advertisements to be placed on an NA site can lead to NA being seen as associated with outside organizations. When areas have no control over the kinds of ads that may be placed on a site, the problem of association is likely to lead to controversy.
- ✎ The area needs to consider that the website is a public forum, and certain information should be kept private. Password-protected areas can serve as a private space on a public website (privacy is not the same as security—secure websites can be useful but can involve more management and greater costs). Meeting minutes containing the names and contact information of members, for instance, may best be kept private through password protection.
- ✎ When trying to make a website more secure, trusted servants must be sure to keep track of passwords. That way, if a trusted servant leaves a committee under unfavorable circumstances, the area can change the website's password. Security issues can also be lessened by creating a simple website with less encryption, and by not using free web hosting.
- ✎ Areas can make decisions about whom to link to by considering if the intended link furthers NA's primary purpose. For example, sites that provide maps to meetings are often used on NA websites with a disclaimer stating that NA is not affiliated with the map site.

- ✎ One way to provide links to other NA areas and regions is by linking to the NAWS regional links page (<http://www.na.org/links-toc.htm>). By linking to the NAWS website, an area doesn't have to use its human resources to regularly check and verify links.
- ✎ A service committee may want to investigate which organizations link to the local NA site. Following up on sites that link to us by making sure that the information about NA is up-to-date and accurate can be a great way to strengthen public relations.

Domain name/website ownership and accountability

- ✎ To ensure continuity, website domains ought to be owned and paid for by the service body. The area budget can plan for this so that there are enough ongoing resources to sustain the site.
- ✎ Since the area is ultimately accountable for the NA website, the body should establish itself as the responsible entity for the website, rather than the website being tied to a single trusted servant. An area can usually establish itself as the accountable entity by providing a mailing address (this process is similar to obtaining a bank account in the area's name). Having the website tied to the service body allows for rotation of trusted servants and eliminates any questions about ownership of the site.
- ✎ The area's email address also needs to be tied to a committee. Trusted servants should have the responsibility to regularly check and respond to email. If an area receives email, members can respond to the email by letting the sending person know that a member is getting the information they requested and will get back to them as soon as possible. Inquiries can be discussed by the ASC and, if needed, delegated to the appropriate trusted servant or committee.
- ✎ In emerging areas where there is no formal area service committee, a group of addicts can be responsible for the local NA website. A group of addicts making decisions about the local NA website is often a more prudent approach than having the responsibility fall on one individual. These trusted servants can then establish accountability through local NA groups in the emerging area.

Web servant responsibilities

- ✎ The area can clearly define the responsibilities that will be delegated to the web servant. In defining the web servant's role, the area also needs to establish that the web servant is accountable to the area.
- ✎ Members of the area can make it a practice to review the area website on a regular basis as a way to ensure that the web servant is responding to the area's requests.
- ✎ As stated earlier in this chapter, an area is best served by a website that can be easily passed along to other trusted servants. If a website is difficult to maintain, it may be hard to find trusted servants who are able to take on the commitment.
- ✎ An area may want to divide web responsibilities among trusted servants. For example, a chairperson, who may or may not have the technical skills needed for web maintenance, could be in charge of verifying and updating information submitted to the website. Other trusted servants or committee members, who are delegated responsibilities through the committee, could manage the technical aspects of the website.

Discussing and addressing known challenges with Internet technology

NA members often self-publish through personal websites. A note of caution (as outlined in Chapter Two) is to avoid stating that a person is an NA member. Using language like “recovery” and “twelve-step program” can help a site avoid being mistaken as an area or regional site of Narcotics Anonymous.

If a member has used NA’s name on a personal website, then it is especially important not to use pictures of any members on that site, just as an area or region would avoid posting members’ pictures on its website. The use of members’ pictures in association with NA falls outside the principle of anonymity. If pictures are used on a personal site, the NA name should not be used, for the reasons described above.

Someone’s voice being heard on the web doesn’t compromise our anonymity in the same way that pictures can. Some NA websites post members’ sharing so that NA’s message can be accessed around the world via the website. This approach seems to maintain members’ anonymity better than a picture or video would. If a member chooses to participate in sharing that is made accessible via the web, it is important to remember that the share may come into public view. It also may be worth considering avoiding graphic descriptions of active addiction in shares posted on the web.

“It is important to remember that there isn’t the same kind of personal anonymity online as there is in an NA meeting.”

It is important to remember that there isn’t the same kind of personal anonymity online as there is in an NA meeting. In most cases, Internet communications can be tracked back to the user or individual computer and can be made available to outside parties or agencies (except when sophisticated encryption or other technologies are used). In an effort to keep private information out of the public’s view, message boards or chat rooms used for online meetings or service-related discussions should be made as private as possible. That way, the public cannot view the history or post to these forums. Passwords and other systems such as peer-to-peer instant messaging can provide a level of privacy. When considering personal anonymity and NA’s public image, it is important to keep in mind that having publicly available postings or messages means that whatever is posted online can be viewed by any Internet user in the world for long periods of time.

Putting your plan into action

Uses of Internet technology and NA websites

The following list contains examples of how areas and regions have used the web to communicate with each other and with the public:

- 📄 One of the most important uses of Internet technology is to **provide information about NA**. Websites are often the first glimpse someone will have of what the NA program is—whether the viewer is a professional, a family member, or an addict trying to find a meeting. When thinking about how to manage a website’s information, it is important to remember that misinformation can be worse than no information at all.
- 📄 Another use of NA Internet technology is **communication among service bodies**. Bulletin boards, chat rooms, and email lists are commonly used to hold service meetings, especially in areas encompassing large geographic distances. An unmediated forum, however, is like a service meeting with no chair or facilitator—if there is no set agenda,

the focus can easily be lost. Addresses for email lists can be created based on service titles instead of an individual's name—for example, vicechair@thebiggestheartofNAarea. This allows for continuity when members rotate service positions. The anonymity of members in these forums can be protected through the use of a sign-up process or passwords.

- 📄 If the area wants to post **NA literature online**, it should do so by linking to NAWs' website, www.na.org. An area should not reproduce and post any of the fellowship's copyrighted literature, including the steps or traditions, the readings, IPs, or lengthy quotes. For more information regarding the *Fellowship Intellectual Property Trust*, visit www.na.org.
- 📄 If an area is thinking about posting **non-fellowship-approved information** such as flyers or local newsletters, trusted servants may want to consider how that type of information might affect NA's public image. Member-focused literature may not always be the kind of information an area wants to publicly display. A group conscience is a good way to make decisions about whether or not to post non-fellowship-approved information on a local website.
- 📄 Various **language groups**, like Spanish-speaking members who live in various countries around the world, have used the web for communication, including service workshops and translations efforts.
- 📄 Some areas maintain archival information such as past service projects or trusted servants' contact information in **databases**. However, the area will want to request that the person who is responsible for creating the database also be responsible for making the information transferable and easily accessible by other trusted servants, including future trusted servants. Any information in a database should be backed up and stored in a common place, not on someone's personal hard drive, and needs to be easily accessible through the most common technology available. Archiving and updating information contained in the database will help to keep a relevant record of the committee's practices. Remembering the purpose of the information and who the audience is can help the area make decisions about how to manage a database.
- 📄 Some **online NA meetings** are held in chat rooms and some are held through email lists. Again, member anonymity needs to be preserved through a sign-up process or some other protocol. It is important to remember that online NA meetings may come into the view of the public and have the potential to affect the public's perception of NA. One of the pitfalls of an online meeting can be overly casual conversation that doesn't seem to be driven by NA's primary purpose.

Internet technology is a valuable tool that has allowed NA members to communicate with each other and with the public in ways that were previously impossible. Taking some time to discuss and plan for how to best use this technology can help to ensure that the information we share with each other and present to the public is reliable, meaningful, and informative.

Resources

- Sample front page design
- Steps for creating a website

EVENT PLANNING

We usually think of NA events as a way to celebrate our recovery or make NA attractive to newcomers, but our events are also an opportunity to make positive impressions on the public. During an event, a hotel staff person may be wondering if a family member could benefit from NA, or a group of medical professionals may be noticing how supportive and prepared NA members seem to be during a presentation. Trusted servants need to be aware of the impact NA events can have on our relationships with the public. That awareness can allow us to anticipate the opportunities and challenges that arise at NA events.

Events that are specifically designed for the public can be effective vehicles for educating the public about what NA has to offer. Community meetings that provide information about NA to the public can be the first step in forming meaningful relationships with the public.

This chapter focuses on both **internal NA events**, such as learning days and fellowship activities, and **external NA events**, such as community meetings and professional events.

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & event planning

**Planning & preparation for
areas & committees**

**Putting your plan into
action**

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience





Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion

Attraction...

Another important consideration in making our public relations efforts more valuable is the attractiveness of the behaviors and attitudes of individual NA members, and the collective appearance of our fellowship. Attraction means that we function, as members and as groups, in ways that naturally draw others to us. When members act in ways that are attractive, this fosters identification and gives potential members a sense of belonging.

-  Has the committee considered the event's format (including speakers) as an important part of creating an attractive NA message?
-  How does our individual behavior impact the attractiveness of the NA program?

Accountability

There are responsibilities that accompany the principle of accountability. These responsibilities apply to all parties engaged in an accountable relationship. A committee has responsibilities to the area and the area has responsibilities to its committee. For instance, if a convention committee is accountable to a regional service committee, that means that the regional committee has agreed to take on certain responsibilities for that committee. If the committee encounters challenges such as a financial crisis or problems with NA's public image during an event, the service body will take constructive steps to help the convention committee. It is helpful for service bodies, such as areas or regions, to understand and accept this responsibility before creating a subcommittee. This understanding can encourage regions and areas to be proactive in their role with committees that are accountable to them. Requesting financial budgets and asking questions of committees encourages accountability and can help avoid larger problems in the future. Not only does requesting budgets establish accountability, but it establishes a reciprocal relationship and reinforces our second concept. Remaining within budget guidelines and maintaining accurate financial records may save an NA community the embarrassment of having to contact an accountant, a lawyer, or even the local police. Accountability may also save us from having to cancel other services because we have overspent our budget.

- 📖 In the planning of an event, how have trusted servants been accountable to a service body through consistent and accurate reporting?
- 📖 What measures are in place to ensure that the trusted servants coordinating an event will be accountable to the area?

Public relations and event planning

A committee will have different considerations depending on the audience, size, and purpose of each event. Events that are intended to train and educate members of Narcotics Anonymous will require planning that differs from events that are for educating professionals about Narcotics Anonymous. Different still are events that are for NA members to come together and celebrate their recovery. All NA events are an opportunity to directly or indirectly further our relationships with the public, and trusted servants can plan each event in a way that furthers our goal of NA being seen as a positive, credible, and reliable option for addicts.

It's also important to consider how we're viewed by society. When NA meetings first began in many places, it was illegal for addicts to meet under any circumstances. Even where meetings are legal, the public often views groups of addicts with alarm. Until NA has established a good public reputation, it may be difficult for addicts to find meeting places. If our behavior as NA members is still destructive and selfish, we will once again have difficulty meeting openly. We help protect our reputation as a fellowship when we use our meeting facilities with respect, keeping them clean and in good repair. We should take care to act like good neighbors, conducting ourselves respectfully. Even something as simple as the name a group chooses may reflect on NA as a whole. If the public reputation of Narcotics Anonymous is somehow impaired, addicts may die.

It Works: How and Why

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

Taking some time to understand what kind of event is most needed in an area will help trusted servants plan events that are more suitable for and tailored to the members and professionals of that area.

- ✎ Planning an effective event means that trusted servants have considered the **needs of the area**. What kind of event would help the area reach its goal of making NA more available to suffering addicts? Do NA members need an opportunity to discuss local service challenges and ways to solve those challenges? These kinds of questions will help trusted servants create events that directly address the needs of their NA community. Events that are linked to an area's needs are more likely to be a conscientious use of NA resources and are more likely to further our primary purpose. An NA event should always work to forward NA's primary purpose.
- ✎ The area will want to be sure to consider the **audience** of an event—for example, whether that event is a workshop for professionals or a learning day for NA members. The specifics of the event, such as location and materials, can then be created based on the needs of the audience members. For example, a workshop for healthcare professionals will require different scheduling considerations and different materials than a workshop for NA members.
- ✎ Defining the **objectives** and desired **outcomes** of an event can help the committee clarify what it plans to accomplish. One way to define these objectives is through a vision statement and a mission statement. A vision statement presents a committee's ultimate aspirations and purpose. A committee's vision might be that one day all members of the public will know what NA is and how NA can help suffering addicts. A mission statement is what the committee hopes to accomplish with a particular event. For example, the mission of an event may be to thoroughly inform local healthcare professionals about what NA is and what NA has to offer the community.
- ✎ The committee will also want to be sure to **cooperate** with groups, other committees, the area, or the region. For example, if a committee is thinking about holding an event at a local meeting facility, members will want to be sure to include groups in the planning process. Since it is likely that GSRs will have been involved in prioritizing an event, it is important to make sure there is enough time to remind groups of an upcoming event. Working to keep local groups involved gives members in the area opportunities to be of service and the ability to support local NA events.
- ✎ Areas or regions can maintain an activity calendar that is distributed to each group service representative. Such a calendar encourages members of the area to support local NA events and helps to avoid duplication when planning events.
- ✎ Individual members should not plan events alone—members should seek the support of the service structure. This ensures that an event is guided by a group conscience and that there is accountability to a group of NA members. There are, however, members in developing NA communities who must take the lead in planning NA events if any action is to happen at all. This note of caution is meant simply to encourage accountability and a group conscience.

We must remember that, wherever we go, we always represent NA to some degree. If we are seen acting poorly while we prominently display an NA logo on our T-shirt, we carry a distinctly unattractive message about our fellowship to the public. What we say and what we do reflects on our recovery and the NA fellowship. As responsible NA members, we want that reflection to be a source of attraction rather than a source of embarrassment.

It Works: How and Why

Once a committee has decided which events seem most needed in the area, **event preparation** can begin. The following points can help committees anticipate many of the challenges that arise when planning an event, whether the event is for NA members or the larger public community. Anticipating challenges can help make NA events into positive examples of how NA functions and what NA has to offer.

- ✎ Site-selection considerations (such as parking, public access, projected attendance, and whether the facility provides things like audiovisual equipment and is handicap accessible) should be considered when choosing a venue for the event. Trusted servants should also be sure to find out if the quote they have been given for the cost of a facility includes things like chairs, cleanup, and the use of a kitchen.

“Trusted servants who will be negotiating with local businesses have to balance any delegated authority they’ve been given with accountability to a committee.”

- ✎ A committee needs to be aware of and follow local regulations. These local regulations can pertain to selling merchandise or food, rules for hiring outside staff, union considerations, etc.

- ✎ Negotiating with local businesses for NA events usually requires patience and flexibility. Trusted servants who will be negotiating with local businesses have to balance any delegated authority they’ve been given with accountability to a committee. Accountability can be demonstrated through thorough and frequent communication. Any contracts should be

made available through written reports, and any legal document should be reviewed by the committee, and possibly a lawyer, before signing. Those members who will be negotiating on NA’s behalf need to also remember that they have a responsibility to maintain NA’s financial stability and that their behavior can have an effect on NA’s public image.

- ✎ Trusted servants need to know whom to communicate with, both in NA and outside of NA. It should be clear who the designated decision maker within the committee is and who the managing staff person at the site is. Creating a relationship with the facility’s staff by acting in ways that support their role will help ensure the success of the event and can enhance our relationships with the public. For example, providing front desk staff with information about NA in general (through IPs, a local meeting directory, etc.), as well as about the NA event being held at their facility, can generate a positive perception of NA and may motivate staff to be more helpful and supportive of the event.
- ✎ Our interactions with meeting facilities’ personnel affect the way NA as a whole will be perceived. An NA event can be the occasion for us to make a lasting impression with members of the public and local businesses. Trusted servants should not assume that a facility staff member or professional knows who we are. When coordinating an event, trusted servants

can take some time to explain what Narcotics Anonymous is and what services NA provides.

- ✎ Trusted servants need to behave in a professional manner with those public businesses they interact with at events. Principles such as cooperation, respect, communication, follow-up, and adaptability are crucial to leaving a positive impression with those outside of NA.
- ✎ A successful event needs members with a variety of qualities and skills. Some ideal qualities are the ability to effectively work with people, resourcefulness, and wisdom to anticipate and solve unexpected problems.
- ✎ An event's success depends on having enough volunteers. There need to be enough trusted servants to plan and coordinate the event and enough trusted servants to set up and clean up an event. Having enough volunteers helps ensure that trusted servants won't become overburdened with too many tasks.
- ✎ Monitoring the progress of tasks that have been assigned to trusted servants is important to the success of an event. Tasks may need to be reassigned if members are not able to fulfill their commitments.
- ✎ A committee needs to have a plan for addressing security issues such as theft and crowd control. Sometimes a facility will require a professional outside service to act as security for an event. It's a good idea to purchase insurance for NA events. Trusted servants will need to research (asking the facility its policy) whether insurance is required for the event.
- ✎ A committee can create a strong communication link between the facility personnel and NA volunteers; inviting facility management or staff to a planning meeting at the facility can be a way to foster strong communication. Committees can hold an initial meeting and/or their final meeting at the facility where the event is to take place. Meeting with a facility's staff gives trusted servants an opportunity to introduce NA members to the staff, as well as time to address anyone's questions or concerns.
- ✎ Creating documents like a timeline (see addenda for a sample timeline), event guidelines, budget (including both human and financial resources), and a final checklist (which includes all materials needed at the event) will help in the overall coordination of the event. Members can create an effective timeline or event plan by beginning with the actual event day and then working backwards.
- ✎ If written materials such as press kits and releases will be used for an event, more than one person should review all the materials before they are released to the public. This can help to minimize errors in the written material.

Chapter Four contains detailed information about presenting to a public and professional audience. Committees planning for these kinds of events may want to refer to that section for more information. The following points are additional considerations when planning an event for an external audience:

- ✎ If the committee is putting on an event for professionals in the community, considering the relevance of the event to this audience is important. Often, professionals who attend NA events do so on their own time and at their own expense. Making convenient venue choices and scheduling the event at a time that is convenient for professional attendees respects the time demands of participants. Addressing these considerations will ultimately add to the success of the event.

- ✍ As detailed in Chapter Four, training and preparing for presentations to professionals should be tailored to the audience and purpose of the event. Training materials can be created as a way to clarify the focus of the particular event. Rehearsing with presentation materials such as audiovisual aids is essential.
- ✍ As stated in Chapter Four, be sure to match supporting visual aids with the audience and the material in the presentation. This means that visual aids may not always be the most appropriate tool. Be sure to consider who the audience is, what the content of the presentation is, and how best to engage the audience with that material.
- ✍ A community meeting is when NA members host an event for interested community members (such as concerned family and friends of addicts, religious leaders, etc.). Trusted servants can use these meetings as an opportunity to provide members of the community with information about NA as a community resource.

Putting your plan into action

Once event planning and preparation are complete, the following are considerations for the actual event.

- 📄 Our behavior at NA events has a direct impact on our public image. If the event is for NA members (such as a learning day), a committee can consider ways to raise awareness about how our personal behavior affects the public's perception of NA as a whole. Some events have included workshops on issues such as NA's public image in order to help members be more aware of how their behavior affects NA's public image.

“...consider ways to raise awareness about how our personal behavior affects the public's perception of NA as a whole.”

- 📄 A written record of an event can be helpful for future events and for the committee's evaluation of an event. A written record should include a summary of what seemed to work and what didn't work, a planning timeline, a sample budget, copies of contracts, and the committee's experience with businesses and facilities in

the community. A written record can help future trusted servants have a historical perspective about local events. For example, if a past committee planned an event for 400 people and only 200 attended, trusted servants can use that information to better plan upcoming events.

- 📄 Event guidelines can also be important to the success of an event. These guidelines can outline the committee's procedures and protocols. They can also establish what the committee expects from specific trusted servant positions.
- 📄 Committee members may want to consider whether merchandise is appropriate for the event. An event can be a success without merchandise. If a committee decides to include merchandise as a part of an event, then the merchandise should be recovery-oriented. Careful consideration needs to be given to whether an event's financial stability depends on the sale of merchandise. The more financially dependent an event is on merchandise, the greater the risk. Planning and research into prior events' history with merchandise can help a committee make informed decisions about the role of merchandise in local events.

NA funds are to be used to further our primary purpose, and must be managed responsibly.

Eleventh Concept

- 📄 NA's traditions and concepts are our guiding principles—we can turn to them if we are in need of direction or guidance. A committee can work to understand and incorporate the spirit of the traditions and concepts in its service efforts. The Eleventh Concept is especially important for planning NA events. For example, if an area has identified an event as a priority, then funds must be spent in a way that aligns that event with our primary purpose.
- 📄 A committee will want to create some sort of follow-up for the event. This could include asking NA members and/or the public audience to evaluate the event. The committee will also want to take some time after the event to discuss and evaluate it based on input from members or professionals who attended.

Post-event actions

The points below can help trusted servants take proactive steps directly following an event. These actions can help the area learn from events and can help improve future events.

- 📄 Be sure that all reports are complete and on file with the area, especially the treasurer's report. Any contracts should be kept so that trusted servants can review them before future events.
- 📄 An inventory of any event merchandise should be taken by calculating total sales and total merchandise left over.
- 📄 Trusted servants may want to take some time to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the event's program. These discussions can be recorded and included in a committee's records for future events.
- 📄 Making sure that all bills are paid on time will help NA's public image.
- 📄 For events such as learning days, where the committee is responsible for cleanup, trusted servants can be sure that they have left the facility in excellent condition.

Our personal behavior affects the public's perception of NA as a whole. At NA events, we have an opportunity to influence the public's perception of the program that has saved our lives. We send a negative message about NA when our behavior is rude and inconsiderate. When we gather in groups and behave in a respectful and courteous manner, we may become the example that inspires someone to find recovery in NA or help a loved one find NA.

Resources

- Sample learning day format
- Sample community meetings format
- Sample event budget
- Sample event format with timeline

FELLOWSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This chapter covers fellowship development in its broadest sense—as providing supportive services to any NA member, group, service body, or NA community in need. The goal of any fellowship development effort is to communicate with and assist NA members and groups.

Some areas may already be providing what this chapter calls fellowship development as outreach. Other areas may be providing fellowship development service without creating a structured committee to do so. What we call this service is not as important as what we are doing to effectively reach out to our own members.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & fellowship development

**Planning & preparation for
areas & committees**

Putting your plan into action

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips



PR principles for discussion

There seem to be a variety ways to go about implementing fellowship development. One way is area service committees that reach out to individual groups or neighboring areas that have asked for their support. Another type of fellowship development is provided by regions and zones. These service structures often approach fellowship development in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. Planning and prioritizing take on ever greater significance in these more complex efforts. Fellowship development gives us an opportunity to practice public relations with our own members. Long-lasting relationships, reaching out to other members, and working toward our primary purpose can make fellowship development an especially rewarding service experience.

Included in this chapter is information about providing support for **NA groups, developing areas, and incarcerated members**. Whether an area is providing a consistent and modest supply of literature to neighboring groups or multiple regions are developing a fellowship development plan for the next five years, this service is essential to NA's growth around the world.



Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Unity: “Together we can”



It is our collective service efforts that help other addicts find recovery. NA has been growing since the 1950s because of members working together to further NA's primary purpose. Many of us are familiar with the group's power to carry the message of recovery to addicts coming to our meetings, and we use groups of members in service the same way. We can see our First

Tradition at work when members put their individual wants and needs aside for NA's common good. Working together to make NA more visible and viable in our local communities not only helps addicts find our program, but is a powerful way of practicing the unity described in the First Tradition.

-  How do we put our individual wants and needs aside for the common good of NA?
-  In our service committees, how do we demonstrate that we are open and welcoming to members and groups?

Attraction...

Another important consideration in making our public relations efforts more valuable is the attractiveness of the behaviors and attitudes of individual NA members, and the collective appearance of our fellowship. Attraction means that we function, as members and as groups, in ways that naturally draw others to us. When members act in ways that are attractive, this fosters identification and gives potential members a sense of belonging.

-  How can areas practice the principle of attraction in their fellowship development efforts?
-  How can members make service more attractive in their fellowship development efforts?

Public relations and fellowship development

There are often a variety of barriers that prevent NA from growing and thriving in certain locations. These barriers can be a result of geography (such as mountain ranges separating NA communities), technology, culture, language, physical disability, economic disadvantage, or a result of members being detached from the service structure. What this service can do is help to make these detached groups aware of the support and resources available within the fellowship. Fellowship development is an opportunity for trusted servants to carry NA's message by building relationships with other NA members.

Although we are autonomous, we may offer loving support to other groups by attending their meetings or offering other help. NA meetings thrive when groups look beyond their immediate needs to offer help to each other.

It Works: How and Why

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

A big part of planning for fellowship development projects is developing an understanding of the principles that can help ensure the success of these efforts. Members can also plan by considering what the best approach (or approaches) is to reach groups and areas that are in need, and what obstacles they are likely to face when reaching out to these groups and areas. Reviewing the planning steps outlined in Chapter Three can help with this planning process.

Fellowship development principles

Principles such as self-support, autonomy, carrying the NA message, and unity are essential to fellowship development service. Trusted servants can strive to find the balance between carrying the message and respecting individuals' and groups' autonomy. Members

often need to be encouraged to recognize their ability to support themselves and how their contributions are a part of NA's principle of self-support. Empowering members and groups with the necessary service materials and support is an important foundation of strong fellowship development efforts.

Approaching members with an attitude of goodwill and with a lack of judgment will help fellowship development efforts be more productive. Groups and areas may be operating in a variety of different ways. It is not the job of those performing fellowship development to manage these groups or areas. A group's way of creatively carrying NA's message can foster energy and excitement among group members.

There are times, however, when these creative ways can become even more useful to a group's primary purpose. Members can offer tools that allow groups to find their own solutions. Trusted servants need to approach this service without any preconceived ideas about members and groups that may not seem as "developed" as their own groups. Our ability to respectfully support groups and members gives them a better chance at more effectively carrying NA's message to suffering addicts.




"Groups and areas may be operating in a variety of different ways. It is not the job of those performing fellowship development to manage these groups or areas."

Coordinating services

Some areas have created a fellowship development committee or a similar kind of committee that is responsible for coordinating all the service efforts for that area. Other area committees delegate the responsibility of fellowship development to the administrative members of the area (usually the area chair, vice chair, treasurer, and secretary), while other areas have created a group liaison or coordinator position. Sometimes, neighboring areas and regions will join together to perform fellowship development service. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, some areas are already providing what is called fellowship development here as outreach efforts. Regardless of how an area coordinates services, supporting other members and groups is a responsibility of the entire area.

Approaches

There are a variety of ways to approach fellowship development. When an area is preparing for fellowship development, trusted servants can look at which approach is more likely to meet the needs of the members who have requested support.

-  Members can provide a way for NA communities to evaluate their own needs. Questionnaires or even informal inquiries through email, letters, or phone calls can help members discover what they believe is most needed. Having current and relevant information about the area's needs will help trusted servants decide which resources are likely to be most helpful.
-  Trusted servants may need to educate groups and areas about the resources available to them. Some members and groups have no experience with the larger service structure and the available support.
-  Fellowship development efforts benefit from prioritization and planning. Fellowship development can place a strain on financial and human resources. For example, a region looking to support a neighboring area may decide to fund trusted servants'

visits to the area. Without adequate planning, this support could cause the region to be in a position where they could, as a result of their fellowship development efforts, be unable to pay their regional phone bill. Planning can help areas and regions evaluate what they can realistically provide.

- ✎ As outlined in the section above, practicing spiritual principles such as open-mindedness and patience is an invaluable approach to any fellowship development efforts. Practicing these principles helps us live the Twelfth Step of our personal program. Incorporating spiritual principles into our fellowship development work allows us to behave in a way that is less likely to cause harm.

Group conscience is the spiritual means by which we invite a loving God to influence our decisions.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Obstacles and solutions

Before beginning fellowship development efforts, it is important to consider what may be some of the obstacles and solutions that are common in this kind of service.

“Respecting cultural differences, economic barriers, language barriers, geographic distance, and legal restrictions is crucial to finding effective approaches. Fellowship development efforts often begin after identifying a group of people that NA has failed to reach.”






- ✎ Giving groups and areas encouragement to move forward in their service efforts is often the most meaningful guidance trusted servants can offer. Letting members know that their approaches to service aren't violating any traditions or that their fears and challenges are similar to those faced by members around the world can be a huge relief. Fellowship development depends on members learning how to evaluate their service efforts and teaching them how to know for themselves when they've stepped beyond NA traditions.

- ✎ Respecting cultural differences, economic barriers, language barriers, geographic distance, and legal restrictions is crucial to finding effective approaches. Fellowship development efforts often begin after identifying a group of people that NA has failed to reach. It can be hard to attract an underserved population to

NA meetings if there is no one in the meetings these groups of people can identify with. One solution is to enlist the help of community leaders by informing them about NA and asking for their input about how to reach people in their community. Including NA members from a particular cultural or ethnic group in these fellowship development efforts is crucial to fostering identification and attraction. If language is a barrier, then trusted servants can find members who speak the same language or look into providing translations services, such as hiring a professional translator.

- ✎ One of the goals of fellowship development is to help local groups have the structures and information to solve their own problems. For example, if an NA group's funds have been mismanaged, members can provide a *Treasurer's Workbook*, sample guidelines, and the experience of other groups and areas. If there is a divide in the fellowship, the job of those performing fellowship development is not to manage conflicts or solve members' problems. Instead, their role is to give groups the tools to solve their own problems.

Practicing NA's principles and not letting personal opinions play a role is often the most helpful approach. Our focus is always NA unity and the primary purpose of groups.

-  We always want to work toward unity in our service efforts. However, with the best of intentions, some members may have unfocused passion or inflexible ideas. Trusted servants can do their best to include these members rather than exclude them. Often, members will continue what they're doing whether they are included in the area service committee or not. Our role is to maintain an open attitude, a welcoming atmosphere, and easy inclusion for these members.
-  NA members can often benefit from some direction about how to focus their passion for NA. Showing these members how to use their energy and passion for NA in a way that will help their community grow is often an important aspect of fellowship development.
-  One challenging aspect of fellowship development is encountering groups that don't want to be part of the service structure. This is a different challenge from that of groups that aren't aware of the service structure and how it can support their primary purpose. Trusted servants can explain the benefits of being a part of a local area, such as having the ability to reach out to more potential members and providing a unified approach to carrying NA's message. Discussing NA's Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts, and the primary purpose of our groups can help in these situations. If an area finds that a number of groups are hesitant about participating in the area service committee, the area can perform a service inventory. This inventory helps the service body identify its strengths and shortcomings. Addressing identified shortcomings may help attract groups back to the area service committee.
-  Some members can misinterpret NA's traditions and concepts. These same members may also be resistant to change after they have established practices in the local NA community. One common issue is groups and members who do not practice a distinct separation between NA and other fellowships. This is a concern because our members may overlook a need to connect with other NA members, and more importantly, it can confuse newcomers about NA's message of recovery from addiction. NA members can approach these situations in a respectful manner and share their experience about what has been effective in their personal recovery and in their groups and areas. An attitude that lacks judgment and fosters goodwill can help members consider the traditions and concepts in a new way and be open to listening to the experience of other members. Learning days and workshops are another way to address this issue—a workshop format can allow this topic to be discussed in a more impersonal fashion.
-  In many developing NA communities, meetings begin in treatment facilities. Trusted servants can help groups establish their independence by encouraging them to be self-supporting. The *Institutional Group Guide* can be a useful resource in helping members take steps toward creating more self-supporting groups. It is important to help treatment staff understand how an NA meeting functions and to help members establish NA with as little internal strife and conflict as possible.

“Trusted servants can explain the benefits of being a part of a local area, such as having the ability to reach out to more potential members and providing a unified approach to carrying NA’s message.”

We encourage each member of the group to contribute thoughts and ideas. Our attitude of open-mindedness helps us remember that each group is part of a greater whole. Acknowledging that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves prompts us to look at still more new ideas. Our diversity can enrich us only when we are open to its richness.

It Works: How and Why

Putting your plan into action

NA groups and areas

There are many ways to help equip groups and areas with the resources they need to provide services. The following are some approaches that may be useful when providing fellowship development services:

Regular **communication**—through mail, email, and phone calls—is often the only way to provide consistent service to some remote groups and areas. It is important to maintain ongoing communication—a committee may want to create a tracking log to make sure that contact is consistent. Friendships can be an effective way to reach out to a group or area, and they can be rewarding for the members.

When possible, members, under the guidance of a service body, can **visit groups and areas** that may not be able or willing to attend a neighboring area’s service committee meeting. Members can also support recovery and service meetings by attending them on a regular basis. These visits seem to work best when a group of addicts, rather than one individual, reaches out. Visiting groups or service meetings on a regularly scheduled

basis, even if it’s only every two months, is more likely to make a lasting impact. It is the consistent contact with other groups that is so helpful to groups and areas in need.

“Members can also support recovery and service meetings by attending them on a regular basis.”

Workshops and learning days are useful tools for strengthening groups and areas. (For information about how to conduct a newcomer workshop, see Chapter Six, “Criminal Justice”.) These events can

help members find solutions and discover new ideas, and can provide a structured way to ask questions. Focusing on a specific aspect of service (such as translation questions) or specific needs (such as getting more trusted servants involved) seems to be the most useful approach for developing areas. Using brainstorming methods at these events can help the area or group find its own solutions. Including social gatherings, meals, and recovery meetings at these events can make service more attractive and create a sense of unity. Some areas and regions have created mobile or traveling workshops that are accountable to a service body. In planning for workshops, trusted servants can work with members who have asked for support to choose topics that best meet their needs.

- 📄 A committee can provide **orientations** for group service representatives. These orientations can be informal gatherings before an area service committee meeting or they can be more formal efforts, such as creating tailored training materials and providing presentations.
- 📄 An area may decide that sending **recovery** and **service material** is the most practical way to reach out to an isolated group or area. Sending resources like meeting directories of neighboring areas, NA literature, contact information for other groups and NA World Services, and recovery tapes or CDs can all be helpful approaches. Areas may also want to send resources that can be requested from NA World Services, such as area inventory guidelines, sample committee guidelines, and *A Guide to Local Services in NA*. Based on what is requested, an area may decide to create tailored resources that meet the specific needs of an area or group. The most important consideration is to find out which resources are likely to be most useful.
- 📄 An area service committee can provide ongoing financial support to fellowship development efforts by making it a regular part of the **area budget**. An area may decide to budget for a fellowship development travel fund. Travel funds can finance members' travel from a remote group or area to an area service meeting. Travel funds can also finance trips to groups or areas that have requested assistance. Budgeting helps trusted servants make realistic decisions about how much the area can afford to spend on a regular basis. Many areas are only able to budget for a small but regular shipment of literature or service material. A regular and modest supply of NA resources is often more helpful than a large one-time shipment that could end up becoming too expensive to maintain. Budgeting for fellowship development efforts will help areas sustain financial resources.

The next section, Incarcerated Members, concerns a specific fellowship development audience. Just as remote groups often request support from NA groups and areas, incarcerated members can often benefit from similar support.

Incarcerated members—inmate correspondence

An inmate correspondence program is another form of fellowship development. Reaching out to incarcerated members is not new to most trusted servants. Some fellowship development committees (or outreach committees) already provide this service, since trusted servants who actually bring meetings into institutions can run into challenges such as issues with inmate favoritism and facility rules. The following points can be considered when planning an inmate correspondence program:

- 📄 An area can define the purpose of an inmate correspondence program by answering some of the following questions: Is the purpose of the program to allow inmates to simply correspond with other NA members, or is it to provide sponsorship and access to formal step work? Should the correspondence program also respond to literature requests? Can the program address some combination of these requests?
- 📄 The area needs to decide who will be responsible for this function. Will it be a committee or area responsibility? How will members volunteer for this service opportunity?
- 📄 Using a PO box is often the only way to provide this service so that members can write to inmates anonymously. Safety issues can arise when inmates know where members live.

- 📄 If a committee is creating a step-writing correspondence program, it can develop written guidelines for members doing the corresponding (clean time requirements are often defined by these guidelines). This can help clarify the role of trusted servants who participate in this service.
- 📄 If the area decides that they will provide a correspondence or step-writing program, then they can attempt to define the nature of these relationships—usually, women write to women and men write to men. Step-writing programs can also include a disclaimer for inmates and members stating that mail is often monitored by correctional officials.

Inmate correspondence reaches a population of NA members who have to overcome very real obstacles. Inmates are often eager to work the steps and are just as hungry for recovery as groups struggling to grow in remote parts of the world. Sample guidelines can be obtained from neighboring areas, regions, or NA World Services.

Our service structure depends on the integrity and effectiveness of our communications.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Fellowship development can make a difference in NA's overall growth and effectiveness. Our ability to support those in need can mean the difference between a strong and thriving NA community and one that is isolated. Successful efforts can also make a difference in a new or incarcerated member's ability to connect with the NA program and find recovery. We can aspire to make it so that every action we take in service demonstrates our desire to carry NA's message of recovery.

GOVERNMENT

Developing relationships with government agencies can help NA be seen as a more credible community resource. These relationships often result in staff of government agencies advocating for NA or providing opportunities for us to make

NA more widely known through programs like government-run public service announcements. In some parts of the world, the existence of Narcotics Anonymous depends on our ability to build and maintain positive relationships with the government. The most important thing is for us to patiently build solid long-term relationships so that more addicts have a chance to learn about NA.

This chapter offers general information about planning and interacting with **national** and **local government**, as well as specific information about interacting with **public service departments** and **police departments** (refer to the Criminal Justice chapter for information about correctional institutions, drug courts, etc.). Areas may want to review Chapter Four for general information about forming new relationships with any organization.

Key topics

Core PR principles

PR & government

Planning & preparation for
areas & committees

Putting your plan into action

Resources

Key icons



Practical experience



Preparation and training tips





PR principles for discussion

Core public relations principles

This section is excerpted from Chapter Two.

Cooperation, not affiliation

Our experience has shown that we have many nonaddict friends who can advocate for NA. If a professional wants to support NA by sharing about the effectiveness of our program, they are free to do that. What we can do is try to ensure that the nonmember's enthusiasm for our program doesn't misrepresent the addict-to-addict nature of our program. NA is not a program where professionals treat addicts, but professionals often want to advocate for NA's viability because they have seen recovery working for their clients or loved ones. The role of the local service body in a situation like this is crucial. The NA community can provide training and establish accountability with the nonmember supporter; this way the nonmember supporter can become an asset to NA's primary purpose.

-  When building relationships with government agencies, how can the area ensure that they have not affiliated NA with this outside organization?
-  What are some ways that the area can cooperate with government agencies?

Public relations and government

Before attempting to build a relationship with any type of government agency, the area needs to be sure that this relationship can be supported through ongoing human and financial resources. Building these relationships can take a long time and can require substantial human resources. As stated in earlier chapters, prioritizing which services are most essential will help an area avoid taking on projects that might jeopardize their ability to provide basic services in their communities.

Planning and preparation for areas and committees

- ✎ Identifying the **purpose** of creating a relationship with government agencies can help an area make decisions about which government departments or agencies to contact. An area may decide to start with the local police department, for example, since they come into contact with addicts every day.
- ✎ When planning how to **communicate** with a government agency, trusted servants can highlight the kinds of resources NA can bring to the relationship. Communicating that NA is a viable (and free) community-based resource may make certain government agencies open to further discussions with us. Communication tools such as informational pamphlets, membership surveys, and *The NA Way Magazine* can also be helpful in establishing relationships with government agencies.
- ✎ As stated in Chapter Four, **researching** the organization we are planning to interact with is important—and this is especially true with any government agency we are planning

“It is also helpful to keep up-to-date with the current government policies...”

to form a relationship with. Websites and referral directories can be a good place to begin this research. Trusted servants can look for information about how the government agency is structured and what the agency’s protocols are. It is also helpful to keep up-to-date with the current government policies for drug treatment. These policies often change and can have an effect on an agency’s attitude toward drug addiction

and drug treatment. Understanding these policies can help trusted servants know how best to approach a particular government agency.


- ✎ We can also research what would be the best way to **contact** a certain government agency. Contact could be made through a letter, phone call, email, or visit. An area’s research should show what would be the most effective way to communicate and whom the area should communicate with.
- ✎ Trusted servants can focus on the **long-term benefits** of building a relationship with the government. It is important to keep in mind that these service efforts may not produce immediate results. Although this kind of service requires patience, these relationships can have a profound effect on the ability of addicts to find NA in the future.
- ✎ When planning to make a presentation to a government agency, the area can think about which **trusted servants** are likely to be best suited for these presentations. Members who have some experience in working with government officials may help to ensure more positive results and can help train other trusted servants in how to interact with government agencies.

In order to serve well, each element of our service structure must make an earnest effort at effective communication. As groups, as trusted servants, as service boards and committees, we must share fully with others, and listen carefully and respectfully to their words.

Twelve Concepts for NA Service

Putting your plan into action

- ☞ Trusted servants can begin these relationships by establishing communication with one government department (for example, a health and human services department, criminal justice department, or a local police department). After an area has built NA's credibility through this initial relationship, trusted servants can ask who in other departments may be able to benefit from information about Narcotics Anonymous.
- ☞ One way to build a relationship with government agencies is to request an exhibit booth at a government-run conference or event. This is an effective way to begin a dialogue and can also be an opportunity for trusted servants to meet people who may not be accessible through correspondence or other general PR efforts.
- ☞ Part of establishing a relationship means that trusted servants must find common ground with the organization they are interacting with. An area may discover that certain government agencies have a negative attitude about addicts or addiction. A police department, for example, might not be instantly receptive to what NA has to offer since they primarily deal with addicts who commit crimes. It is helpful for trusted servants to understand where these attitudes come from and focus on where we do have ideas and goals in common.
- ☞ A very practical guideline for building a relationship with a government agency (or any relationship, for that matter) is to listen to the feedback that's being given. If a certain agency has declined an area's attempt to form a relationship, then it is best to respect that feedback by not continuing to make the same requests. We can always ask about an agency's reasons for not wanting to interact with us, and we can bring that information back to the area for discussion. The area may then decide to contact the department each year through an informational letter or make contact with a different department. We don't want to give up on these relationships, but we want to always be receptive and respectful to the feedback we are given.
- ☞ Visual aids can be a useful tool in presentations given to government agencies (a government presentation template is contained in the addendum to this chapter). These visual aids can help trusted servants stay focused on the presentation material and can be useful for inexperienced trusted servants. Visual aids that provide information about the global nature of Narcotics Anonymous can also have a powerful effect on the audience's perception of Narcotics Anonymous as an effective, global organization.
- ☞ If the area has a relationship with the local or national government and members from World Services are planning a visit to that local area, trusted servants may want to assess if it would be beneficial to set up a meeting. In some cases, government officials may be offended if local members don't offer to introduce member-representatives from world services. Valuing this type of hierarchical tradition may be part of a government's culture. If a meeting is arranged, the involvement of local members is crucial to maintaining these relationships after initial contact has been made.


-  We want to be sure to communicate to a government agency that NA does not endorse any sort of government policies or legislation.

Public service departments

Public service departments such as family and social services agencies can be good organizations to form relationships with. Public service agencies like these frequently interact with those suffering from active addiction. Trusted servants can train social service department workers in how NA can be used as a resource. Establishing a relationship using the techniques outlined earlier in this chapter can provide the area with an opportunity to give presentations (see Chapter Four for information about how to give effective presentations) so that the department is well informed about what NA has to offer their clients. Trusted servants can stay in contact with the organization by providing updated meeting directories and NA contact information.

Police departments

As many of us know, police officers frequently interact with addicts. Because of these frequent interactions, an area may decide to build a relationship with the local police department. Part of planning for a relationship with local police can be a discussion of members' concerns about whether police officers should observe meetings. These discussions can help trusted servants come up with solutions that the area can agree on. If an area then decides that interacting with local police would benefit addicts in the community, then they can begin the relationship by providing meeting schedules and NA literature. Trusted servants may also want to consider giving a presentation to officers at the police academy. As always, maintaining ongoing contact with local police departments can allow for more meaningful relationships. We can strive for having a local police department come to trust NA as a valuable community resource.

 To attract the still-suffering addict to our program, we must take vigorous steps to make our program more widely known. The better and broader our public relations, the better we will be able to serve.

It Works: How and Why

Building long-lasting relationships with government agencies requires areas to be consistent and patient. Yet maintaining these relationships can mean that Narcotics Anonymous becomes a trusted resource for those who often have a far-reaching effect on addicts in the community.

Resources

Audiovisual template for government presentations

conclusion

As it states in Step Twelve of our Basic Text: “The steps do not end here. The steps are a new beginning!” So it is with our public relations efforts. This “new beginning” is likely to take on many variations. Public relations means that we begin thinking differently about our personal behavior and about the ways we perform our roles in an area service committee. Some of us may begin acting as mentors to those newer to service. Others may take time to gain a better understanding of NA’s Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts prior to initiating relationships with the public. Public relations may simply mean leaving our home group facility better than we found it. Hopefully, this handbook helps us begin to act as NA’s ambassadors. We begin to become more aware of the ways each of us affects NA’s relationships with the public. And we begin to responsibly create long-term relationships with the public—relationships that allow for more and more addicts to find recovery in NA. We are the ones who can continue to help NA become a more viable and credible resource in our communities.